TEXT APPEAL: CHOOSING SCRIPTURE MEDIA

FOR THE KWASIO PEOPLE OF CAMEROON

A THESIS-PROJECT

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

BY

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This doctoral thesis-project is dedicated to my parents,

Henri and Joanne Ayotte,

who instilled in me a love for reading and learning,

always encouraging me to educate myself.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28:19-20b (NIV)

The Scriptures nearly always do their work of evangelism

in conjunction with the oral witness of Christians.

Wayne Dye

The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact

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TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Alliance Biblique du Cameroun
ABC	Alphabet Chart
ABS	American Bible Society
BART	Biblical Analysis Research Tool
CABTAL	Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy
CBS	Chronological Bible Storying
CIED-LAK- TRAB	Comité Inter-Ecclésiastique du Développement de la Langue Kwassio et la Traduction de la Bible
DMin	Doctor of Ministry
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire)
FCBH	Faith Comes by Hearing
FOBAI	Forum of Bible Agencies International
GIAL	Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics
IBS	International Bible Society
IJFM	International Journal of Frontier Missions
IMB	International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (USA)
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
LBT	Lutheran Bible Translators
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
MP3	a digital audio format
MT	Mother Tongue
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NOSLP	Notes on Scripture in Use and Language Programs
NT	New Testament
OBS	Oral Bible Storytelling
OT	Old Testament
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
SE	Scripture Engagement
SIL	An academic and religious NGO specializing in linguistics, literacy, Bible translation, and Scripture Engagement
SIU / SU	Scripture (In) Use
SMS	Short Message Service
TC	Textual Criticism
TSC	The Seed Company
UBS	United Bible Societies
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

ABSTRACT

This thesis-project explores several media formats for promoting newly translated Scripture portions in the Kwasio language. The ultimate goal is to see God's Word integrated into the lives of individual Kwasio speakers and to impact Kwasio society. To this end, the author created six print and audio-video formats of the Prodigal Son parable, which were demonstrated and sold at a variety of locations. The study used interview-based questionnaires to assess how much each format appealed to Kwasio speakers during these first years of translation. The research analyzes the sale of the Scripture materials and feedback from respondents who were exposed to the materials. Its aim was to identify some of the more engaging forms of presentation available in Cameroon for communicating the biblical message, and guide the choice of future material productions. The research concluded that the Kwasio people desire a combination of print and audio-video materials, although more people show a greater interest in orality-based audio-video media, especially while the level of literacy is low.

CHAPTER 1. KWASIO SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT: PROBLEM AND SETTING

A.THE ISSUE—BIBLE TRANSLATION AND SCRIPTURE USE

Introduction to the Problem

Bible translators, in mission contexts, are called and trained to take part in the translation of Scripture into the vernacular primarily for people groups who speak unwritten languages. The ultimate goal of a Bible translation project is to foster positive transformation in the lives of believers and their communities through the practical application of truths from God's Word. Wayne Dye says that most Bible translators not only want to see the Bible translated into vernacular languages, but they want to see it used in churches and have an impact on individual members, congregations, and the society as a whole.[1]

Dye insists that the Bible translated into the mother tongue changes lives, only if people understand it; and understanding it depends on many factors. First of all, the biblical message must come in a language the target audience comprehends, such that it is expressed in a style which follows the natural structures of the language. Cultural differences must be translated, or explained, in a way that the target audience can understand as closely as possible what the original audience likely understood.[2] By relying on good exegesis, the translation should accurately and clearly communicate the

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[1] T. Wayne Dye, "Fostering Scripture Use in Churches: What We Need to Know," *Notes on Literature in Use and Language Programs* 29 (1991): 23–26.

[2] This involves a delicate balance of translation that simultaneously domesticates and foreignizes the source text.

content of the source text, as well as the author's intent.[3] Then, it must be presented in a format the target audience can access. The Word of God also needs to be read or heard in community with others. In general, African cultures are group oriented. They are accustomed to carrying out life activities communally rather than individually. Yet, none of the methods mentioned above, however creative, can be successful without God's intervention. Therefore, we rely wholly on the Holy Spirit to brings God's Word to life, when it is translated, read, and heard.

In Cameroon, missionaries began planting churches and making converts over 125 years ago. Yet today, there is still a widespread lack of spiritual maturity in the lives of believers and local pastors. This is exhibited in a weak understanding of Christian theology and a general unawareness that the Bible has practical answers for most of their daily concerns. I have met few Christians who know how to apply the Bible's teachings to their circumstances and the issues which trouble them. This observation can also be made of Western Christianity, where an increasing number of evangelicals can be said to be syncretistic in their belief and practice. When the Christian belief system is not made incarnational in the language and culture, syncretism abounds. What I mean by "incarnational" is an extension of the theology of the incarnation: Jesus the Word, became (or "was translated into") human flesh. Similarly, the Word of God, as the content of God's message, should be translated into the recipient language and culture using vocabulary and cultural concepts of the people in a way that maximizes

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[3] Deciphering the content and especially the intent of the biblical authors is a difficult task that we can never ascertain with absolute certainty.

their understanding of the truths contained in it. In my view, God's message is everything that is true about himself, the world, man, history, and future events, which has come to us in written form, encased in imperfect, finite human languages.

In the majority of churches in our southwestern area of Cameroon, many long-time members, even many pastors and active lay leaders, continue to practice traditional religious rites unabashedly. Most of them do so out of ignorance of their demonic affiliations, not recognizing that many of these rites are in opposition to God's commandments. For example, one of our village pastors believes in the saving power of Christ. Yet, he turns to his traditional religious practices to protect his children from the attacks of evil spirits. Instead of praying and trusting God for protection over their physical and emotional health, he ties charm-bands on his children's ankles and waists to protect them.

This case epitomizes how Christian practices and beliefs remain foreign, only touching a thin veneer of life that rarely penetrates deeply into people's underlying cultural values and worldview. Many churches grow in number from the conversion of new believers, but spiritual vitality remains low or stagnant due to a lack of discipleship. Contrastingly, in churches where vernacular Scriptures are available, and people understand and apply them, lives and communities have been transformed to a greater degree.[4] Individual believers tend to mature in their faith and churches grow stronger

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[4] There are innumerable testimonies that support this fact. For example, the reader may refer to the stories on the following webpage: https://seedcompany.exposure.co/ for stories on evangelism and discipleship See also, https://www.onebook.ca/stories/ for other evidence of transformation.

spiritually. The Word of God in the vernacular is an indispensable component of evangelism, conversion, discipleship, and spiritual maturity.[5]

Over the years, Bible translation agencies in Cameroon, such as SIL, have seen in some of their translation projects, the printed Scriptures being under-used or nearly unused.[6] There is anecdotal evidence of published New Testaments being left unread, sitting on shelves or even remaining in the boxes in which they were shipped by the printer.[7] We can attribute this outcome to a combination of access issues, such as: (a) low literacy; (b) a difficult orthography; (c) inadequate promotion of the Scriptures: prohibitive pricing, inadequate distribution, and a lack of awareness that materials exist or how to obtain them; (d) insufficient local ownership; and (e) less than ideal media types or presentation methods. Any of these conditions can lead to a low interest in reading available Scriptures.[8] The percentage of people who read regularly may also be low, because (1) reading is not a valued or an oft-practiced activity in the culture, and (2) the input effort required for reading outweighs the benefit it yields.[9] According to Relevance Theory, people are not motivated to put in the time and energy to read

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[5] The vernacular is often referred to as the mother tongue, typically the first language learned at home, from their mother or primary caregiver. It often becomes the language of the heart, the one that speak most deeply to the person. Sometimes, people become more familiar with a second language. For example, my father's first language is French, much of which he has forgotten. He now functions almost exclusively in English, his language for all communication and study.

[6] There are other Bible agencies in Cameroon: Lutheran Bible Translators, Bible Society of Cameroon, World Team, and CABTAL.

[7] While I do not have statistics to show the underuse of Scriptures I have heard comments over the years (and continue to hear) from colleagues about Bibles being unsold, remaining in their boxes. I have also heard about entire denominations that have not accepted a translation and therefore have not used it. I have heard some stories from colleagues in other parts of the world: Africa, Asia, South America.

[8] The target audience may not be able to access Scripture, because audio or video are not available.

[9] This may be due to reasons (a), (b), or (e) explained earlier in this paragraph.

something if they cannot see an immediate, tangible benefit from the activity of reading.[10]

In Sub-Saharan Africa, at least two groups are responsible for under-used vernacular Scripture: mission organizations and national churches—both past and present. Since the colonial period, these two groups have extensively adopted Western communication styles and pedagogy. To a large extent, they have continued to maintain mismatched approaches, without enough critical reflection on how foreign they might be to indigenous ways of doing things.[11] However, deeply-held Western values and practices are changing slowly, even though not as rapidly as our understanding of the differences in teaching and learning styles between Africa and the West is changing.

One might expect that local churches would be more attuned to the needs and preferred learning styles of their own people. Yet, they too, have accepted, rather uncritically, Western preaching and teaching styles. Many churches still have choirs singing translated hymns, despite an increasing number of African praise songs adapted to African styles of worship.[12] The use of drama or storytelling is rarer here than in Western churches, quite paradoxically, given that African culture is saturated with these

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[10] Robert A. Dooley, "Relevance Theory and Discourse Analysis: Complementary Approaches for Translator Training," *GIALens* 3 (2008): 1; Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001); Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, U.K. : Boston, 2000).

[11] The differences are more pronounced in rural settings. In the Sahel region of West Africa, where Islam has a stronger presence, a slightly higher value is placed on books than their Christian and animistic African contemporaries. Sacred texts have the power of a fetish, even if the words are not spoken aloud.

[12] Ethnomusicologists might argue now that those imported hymns have become indigenous after more than a century has passed, where several successive generations have heard them since birth.

arts. I would expect to find African churches using much more drama and storytelling than US or European churches. In my own experience, this is not the case.

One of the driving forces at the heart of the Kwasio translation project (and others like it) is that most partners and stakeholders desire to see the Scriptures used to their full potential.[13] In the last two decades, Bible translation agencies and many church-planting missions have been proactive in drawing attention to the need for Scripture Engagement, in order to avoid the undesirable outcome of under-used or unused Scriptures.[14] This problem of underused Scripture can be partially overcome by Scripture Engagement activities that are innovative, initiated early in the translation process, and created to be ongoing.[15] In order to encourage people to access the Scriptures regularly, it may be necessary to experiment with any media format that seems suited to the context. It is important to figure out early in a translation project, which presentation forms create the greatest level of accessibility and interest in the Scriptures. Ideally this should be done before translation is even started.[16] Looking for media that have

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[13] Keith Robinson, "SIL International Board Policy Manual," *Insite Wiki*, (November 2013): Preamble, https://www.wiki.insitehome.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=15206916. In the Preamble of the "SIL Ends Statement: What benefits, for whom and at what cost" expounds the goals of those serving in the Bible translation movement. It reads: "Our motivation as members of SIL International is to serve God and his church, and to serve humanity as Christ did. We cherish the hope that in each language community, God will draw people to himself, and establish bodies of believers who will use the translated Scriptures for spiritual growth and for outreach. SIL's special concern is for those language communities that lack access to the Scriptures in the languages and media that best serve them."

[14] Scripture Engagement was formerly referred to as Scripture-In-Use. I have chosen to highlight only a small facet in one aspect of this field, namely Scripture impact.

[15] This problem of under-used Scripture may be the primary reason for recent developments in Scripture Engagement and changes in mission philosophy and strategy.

[16] Knowing what kind of presentation formats will be suitable for the target audience (spelled out in a "translation brief") will determine what kind of translation is needed, such as an oral style, dynamic, etc.

potential to be long-lasting and cost-effective, is more desirable than adopting, by default, the practices of those who promoted Scripture Engagement in the past.

Over the years, the Scripture Engagement philosophy of SIL has shifted to reflect the realities of the places where it has worked. Official documents show a change from a previous emphasis on literacy to SE that includes literacy, orality, technology, and other media. Statements in SIL International's board policy manuals have been continually updated with increased focus on access to, and engagement with, Scripture: that "language communities worldwide have access to Scriptures and related materials in the languages that serve them well…and communities of believers are engaging with them for personal growth and in transforming their society." [17] The following sub-points of SIL's SE policies are the most germane to the discussion of my thesis:

- materials are available in usable media which are appropriate to the situation, including print and/or non-print forms;

- where print media are appropriate, literacy skills are adequate within the community; and

- most members of the language community accept its use as a medium of communication in the domains and media for which the materials have been prepared.

These statements underline SIL's expressed goals to provide Scripture materials in

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[17] Robinson, End A. *End A. Access to and use of Scripture and related materials* reads, "In this and every generation, language communities worldwide have access to adequate Scriptures and related materials in the languages that serve them well, and motivated members of those communities are able to use them for personal growth."

media formats that are most acceptable to the community, most useable by them, and by which they may acquire literacy skills where necessary. Although SIL, and other mission agencies, are constantly modifying their philosophy of Scripture Engagement (SE) in official documents, actual training and practice still lag behind.

While it is true that anyone can be taught to read, the lifestyles of many target audiences are such that they will probably never become a society of readers like we find in other nations, no matter how high one can raise the literacy rate.[18] It may not be realistic to maintain a vernacular literacy rate much higher than 50% in a context where owning books is considered a luxury and where regular reading is viewed as an activity of the elite. Therefore, relying on literacy as the primary means of promoting Scripture is impractical. Evangelical Christians appear to have the greatest motivation for reading Scripture, because they value reading for the access it provides them to the Word of God.[19] Yet, even in many evangelical churches, in my experience, members who regularly read their Bible remain few.[20] Even if the vernacular literacy rate can be elevated, there is no assurance that the ability will carry over to active reading. Nevertheless, in response to these circumstances, SIL aims to promote a level of literacy

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[18] In developing nations, people have less time, energy, and resources to make reading a regular activity. They spend their days in full-time in subsistence activities. When daylight ends, light sources are usually a luxury. Reading glasses are not always available. Yet, even if the right conditions can be met, reading rarely has a high enough priority to be practiced regularly especially in the evening.

[19] For one reason or another, the Pentecostal denominations to which I have been exposed tend to encourage more regular reading of Scripture than other types of churches. At the least, Pentecostal leaders stress the importance of studying Scripture.

[20] A vast majority of Cameroonians, whether in cities and villages, are schooled in French. Most people can read French fluently and have access to several French versions of the Bible.

high enough for a segment of society to continue accessing vernacular Scripture, while endeavoring to increase Mother-Tongue literacy among the rest of the population.

Scripture Engagement

Scripture Engagement is really a newly developing field where new ideas are being tested and old ideas refined as we learn from experience in other cultures and disciplines. In recent decades SIL created a department devoted to increasing the use of translated Scriptures, now commonly referred to as Scripture Engagement.[21] A specialized training track exists for members who join the organization with a desire to serve in this role. Scripture Engagement specialists find ways to promote vernacular Scripture within the communities for whom they were translated.[22] They find ways to make the Word of God relevant and accessible to the target audience. They explore presentation methods and media that will encourage engagement with Scripture. Results can be measured by regular reading, listening, or studying Scripture and the extent to which its teachings are appropriated and demonstrated in changed lives.

Raising interest in translated Scripture can be accomplished by making it more relevant at different points: (1) providing a dynamic version of Scripture with helps;[23] (2) increasing the literacy rate; and (3) producing and presenting the Scriptures in media

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[21] Originally called Scripture In Use (SIU) by SIL, then shortened to SU, it was then changed to Scripture Engagement (SE) in conformity with the terminology used by other organizations. For more resources, see the Forum of Bible Agencies International website http://scripture-engagement.org/. Translated Scriptures may be published in print, audio, video, other formats, or a combination of these.

[22] This endeavor has traditionally been one of the last steps in a Bible translation program. Scripture Engagement is increasingly being done earlier in the translation process than was done previously.

[23] Helps include items such as notes, commentary, maps, and illustrations to assist readers in understanding the text, especially new readers or new believers who may lack background information and context.

formats adapted to the cultural context and local conditions. The first focuses on translation—providing Scripture in an appropriate language, style, and format. The second focuses on print literacy—concentrating efforts on literacy training.[24] Scripture Engagement specialists tend to focus their attention on the third option—actively looking for a variety of media formats, including other print media and non-print media such as oral presentation (e.g., story, drama, reading aloud), audio, video, and other technologies to promote the Scriptures. Ideally, those interested in seeing translated Scriptures used, must research Scripture Engagement activities as translation begins, especially non-print options, not waiting until they have a published New Testament.

Scripture Engagement workers try to develop Scripture materials that are locally sustainable. In order to do that, they look for materials that create immediate interest, encourage ongoing long-term interest, and ultimately influence people's routines vis-à-vis Scripture.[25] The materials, presentation formats, and technologies must be culturally appropriate for the end users. Additionally, the community must be able to reproduce Scripture media affordably from resources and available to them. These are the Scripture Engagement factors I wanted to test in the translation projects we serve.

Context of the Thesis-Project

Since 2011, my wife and I have been facilitating the Kwasio translation project in the southwestern coastal area of Cameroon. In addition to working in SE, we were

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[24] Poor orthography, low reading interest, and inappropriate media require a high investment in training with little return. It requires re-evaluation of the phonology and investigation of SE concerns.

[25] Successful Scripture Engagement is measured by people's increased involvement in ministries, positive changes in behavior, increased church attendance, and overall enthusiasm for sharing the faith.

overseeing the coordination of activities and training in Bible translation, literacy, linguistic analysis, church relations, funding, and project management. By the time I had initiated this thesis-project, the Kwasio translation team had translated nine of Jesus' parables in Luke's Gospel. Early on, we chose the parable of the Prodigal Son to conduct the research for this Scripture impact study. Although we worked hard to produce a literacy primer simultaneously with the translation of the parable, the committee was unable to set up MT literacy courses by the time the printed parable became available.

Approximately three-quarters of the people in this region are said to be literate in French.[26] Most people, however, own very few books. Even fewer regularly read the books they own or can borrow. Contrastingly, many have cell phones and access to electricity. While some have televisions and DVD players, only a very small percentage have computers or access to one. A major deterrent to using these devices is the lack of consistent electricity. Of the three largest towns in the region, Bipindi has virtually no electricity, Lolodorf has sporadic electricity, and Kribi has only a slightly more dependable electric supply. Therefore, one can never completely rely on electronic media in most locations.[27] Although I would have preferred to test some oral-aural

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[26] This is the popularly held estimate of French literacy. We expect the population to have a higher literacy rate in French than Kwasio. They receive years of schooling in French they will never receive in Kwasio. People are motivated to learn French, the language of education, government, media, and commerce, where the best opportunities for employment and advancement exist.

[27] For practical purposes, this fact would push us to investigate oral communication methods. Ideally, I would have included oral Bible story-telling as one of the Scripture "products" in this research; but the training and time required for orality activities are beyond the scope of the current translation work.

communication methods that do not require electricity, the scope of this thesis-project

did not allow for the time required to develop and assess many orality-based media.[28]

The Materials Developed & Produced

"The Prodigal Son" parable was quickly formatted using a document template that

contains fourteen illustrations depicting scenes in the parable (see Appendix-B). The A5

format is printed on both sides of A4-size paper and folded in half to make a small

leaflet prepared with eight of the drawings. I formatted a coloring book using all

fourteen illustrations, enlarging the images, and printing them on A3-size paper, which

is folded and stapled to yield an A4-sized booklet of 14 pages.[29] The scene depicted on

each page is accompanied by a single descriptive sentence, giving an outline of the

story. These coloring books were sold with a small packet of colored pencils. We added

a third print item: a 6-foot-long banner with the full text and the same 14 illustrations

on white plastic, using black and blue ink.

In addition to the three print media formats, we produced an electronic audio-video

version which uses the same illustrations, but in color. A digital template contains all the

images in color. The images are viewed as if a camera is panning in and out, giving the

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[28] Oral denotes speech, aural describes the hearing aspect. In the Iyasa ("Yasa" in Ethnologue) translation project, running concurrently with the Kwasio project, we have been trying an oral translation to promote Scripture. Lack of an accepted alphabet and a reported low interest in reading compelled us to pursue a non-print strategy. The Iyasa people are Kwasio's neighbors, and part of the language cluster we have overseen since 2004. In September 2012, during planning meetings with Iyasa team members and SIL specialists, while looking for a solution to the lack of an alphabet to do written translation, an Iyasa linguist boldly stated, "Our people will not be very interested in picking up and reading the Scriptures in print; but if they could hear the Scriptures told orally, they would listen intently." This sparked my idea to include non-print in my research proposal. (See also footnote 32).

[29] This format is known by some Cameroonians, especially in the cities, where they can be seen at school or church. When my wife and I used them in children's church, the children liked them immensely.

impression of depth and movement. The template has places to enter the full text

accompanying each image. It also allows for the addition of a recorded audio track of

someone reading the text, which can be synchronized with the corresponding image.

This finished AV format was then copied onto DVD, CD, and SD cards, which could be

viewed on computer, DVD/CD players, or cell phones. Over a period of six months,

surveyors demonstrated and sold these products to the population at various venues.[30]

B.THE RESEARCH QUESTION--THESIS

The starting point of my research question assumes that the medium in which

Scripture is presented does affect its use. Therefore, my thesis asks: What will be the

most appealing Scripture media formats for the Kwasio community at this time? The

purpose of my study was to determine which ones have the greatest immediate appeal,

and which ones might foster higher levels of engagement for the near future. I wanted

to know which formats would encourage regular use and hold their interest over a

longer period of time, because they fit their current lifestyle and technology

preferences. I also wanted to know which media: print, audio, or audio-video will most

effectively transmit the Bible messages and help people remember the content.

My research focuses on the initial impact that the media would have on the

community. It does not investigate the long-term impact of the Scriptures being studied

and applied, as in other Scripture Engagement research. My research looks primarily at

two criteria to assess the level of appeal—which products people most purchased and

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[30] Most of the media were sold at or below cost.

which single format they preferred over all the others. For purposes of feasibility I limited the study to a small selection of available formats.

Some of the secondary research questions prompted by this study include the following: Which media formats of the Scriptures might have the greatest long-term impact? Which ones will give the maximum number of people access to the Bible across all age groups? What are the most relevant or meaningful channels of learning for each age group: literacy, orality, visual or a combination of these? In the process of identifying pertinent media, I argue that print media should *not* be the initial nor primary product for engaging the Kwasio with vernacular Scripture.

What We Expect to See Happen & Why

During this study I expected that the Kwasio who are exposed to the media would most often choose the audio-video formats of the parable. Among these, I anticipated that people would prefer the SD cards, which are easily inserted in cell phones and can be viewed by many people on their own devices. Secondly, this format can be quickly copied and passed on freely to others. The hope is that such a format would spread, or "go viral" as some online videos, tweets, and hashtags do on the internet. I also expected an interest in the DVD just below that the SD cards. Out of the three printed formats, I suspected that the coloring book would be most interesting to people, since coloring is more interactive and something that Cameroonian children have little opportunity to do—whether in school or church. Additionally, the large images and

simplified text can reduce the cognitive investment required by the full text. A coloring

book also has the potential to pique the interest of parents and other adults.[31]

Assumptions

I start with two major assumptions. First, I believe that God wants people to have

access to Scripture, understand it, and apply it to their daily lives. Scripture can address

the challenges confronting them and answer the questions that concern them.

Secondly, I assume that Scripture in the vernacular will be more effective for engaging

people than Scripture in any other language. Lastly, I presuppose that the preferred

mode of communication for most Cameroonians is oral. This is a generally

acknowledged fact in Sub-Saharan Africa. This sentiment was also expressed by a

linguist in the neighboring Iyasa translation project. He said that his people would much

rather hear the Scripture read aloud or told dramatically than read it for themselves

from a written text.[32]

My wife and I have seen firsthand how strong Cameroonians are in oral

communication. In churches across West and Central Africa, there is a vast array of

contemporary, indigenous, worship songs sung in churches. They are acquired orally,

since few churches have songbooks or other means of displaying the lyrics to these

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[31] The recent introduction of a children's Sunday School curriculum at churches in the Ndop Plain of Cameroon, unexpectedly sparked an intense desire among adults to participate in the lessons, some exclaiming that they were learning Bible truths they had never heard before. Chris Jackson, "Jackson Family eNews: Encouraging Reports," August 13, 2012.

[32] Sammy Mbipite Tchele, Personal Communication, September 26, 2012. SIL Cameroon Language Services personnel met with the Iyasa team to discuss a strategy to deal with their orthography dilemma, which was an obstacle to written Bible translation. Sammy explained that most Iyasa speakers would not be interested in printed Scripture booklets. They would probably not take them, but if they did, would not keep them nor read them. They would much rather hear the Scriptures told orally or read aloud to them.

praise and worship songs as they are being sung. We have regularly attended local

churches for more than nine years. In all that time, I have still not memorized all of the

words in half of those songs. Yet, the majority of churchgoers seems to be able to sing

all of them without difficulty. In the West, we are dominated by the written word. If one

takes a quick look around in any church which uses hymnals, songbooks, or projects

lyrics on a screen, one sees congregants reading along as they sing, no matter how long

they may have been singing them—sometimes for decades.

Another assumption going into this study is that the people in our area of Cameroon

are attracted to modern technology: computers, TV-DVD players, and cell phones, in

particular. Anyone who has been exposed to these electronic devices desires to own the

latest technology.[33] In addition to their utility for making communication easier, they

serve many other functions, such as listening to music, viewing photos, playing games,

and accessing the internet, especially for social media. Additionally, some people are

drawn to these technologies by curiosity or for the prestige they think it can impart to

the owner.[34] Yet, these are not ideal motivators for leading people to the Scriptures.

Nevertheless, for certain segments of society who might not otherwise access God's

Word, they may be the very means that attracts them to Scripture.[35] Some technology

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[33] This desire is perhaps a global human phenomenon, where electronic devices are infiltrating every corner of the world, and everyone wants to own the most recent model.

[34] Prestige can be determined by how affordable an item is. Therefore, not everyone will have access to certain technologies. The ethical implication is that some segments of society may have less access to Scripture in some media. This highlights the continuing inequality of the human condition. We should not ignore the potential of some technologies to promote God's Word among one group, nor its negative effect on them or another group of people. God can change a person's heart through his Word, regardless of how they access his message and approach him. It is not an unbiblical, but a legitimate means.

[35] As a result, they could come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

will naturally limit access to some groups of people, while enhancing access to others. This is why we must consider the potential capacity of any communication tool at our disposal in order to engage audiences as much as possible with the Scriptures.

Methodology

My methodology can be distinguished on two levels: research methodology, and Scripture Engagement methodology. I begin with the Scripture Engagement methodology. There is a wide variety of Scripture Engagement media tools at our disposal for promoting Bible use, many of which I considered at the inception of my thesis-project. The following list gives an idea of the materials and methods of presenting the parable, which I considered: SMS text, audio and video for cell phones, bi-fold brochure, an illustrated "big" book, posters, coloring books, audio recordings with listening groups, video slide-shows, film, radio broadcasted readings, oral story-telling, music production, drama, and reading aloud. I eventually narrowed the production of materials to these six: three in print—leaflet, coloring book, and banner; and three audio-video—on CD, DVD, and SD card.

For my research methodology, I used two questionnaires: an Initial Questionnaire and a Follow-up Questionnaire (see Appendix-A). The initial one would be administered at the time the products were first displayed and made available for purchase. The second one was intended to be used on a second visit a few weeks or months later, to assess usage and attitudes after a lapse in time. The completed questionnaires were meant to serve as a record of both the quantity of items sold and the interviewees'

anecdotal responses. I also asked the surveyors to document their own observations and impressions as the respondents reacted to the materials.

A colleague involved in Scripture Engagement recommended that local people be involved in the face-to-face phase of the research, rather than having an expatriate missionary like myself carry it out. However, this would limit my direct control as the primary researcher over many details of the study's implementation.[36] Nevertheless, I followed her advice by choosing the project's community mobilizers and translators to conduct the interviews in the field. One advantage of using local personnel, was that the surveyors lived in the towns targeted for this study: Kribi, Lolodorf, and Bipindi, where people would not regard them as outsiders.[37] Once the Scripture products were ready, the surveyors would display and sell them in those three principal towns of the Kwasio-speaking area. They would go to church and village events with the expectation of finding a gathering of people. They traveled with the Scripture products, a laptop and a cell phone, if available, and some questionnaires.

Parameters of the Thesis-Project

I worked primarily from the capital city of Yaoundé, Cameroon, with occasional trips to Kribi where I could meet translators, mobilizers, and some of the committee members in person. I began this thesis-project in early 2012 after the translators finished translating the Prodigal Son parable and had it checked by a translation

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[36] I have wondered how much the surveyors influenced the responses of the interviewees. I noticed some comments in questionnaires that resembled attitudes expressed by the surveyor who conducted the interview.

[37] They are located along the east-west road that originates on the coast at Kribi, heading inland and terminating roughly at Lolodorf 120 kilometers away. Bipindi lies approximately mid-way along this route.

consultant. Throughout most of 2013 we worked on formatting the three print versions, finding print services to produce them, then recording and editing the audio-video version to be copied on DVD, CD, and SD cards. By late 2013, I had created the two questionnaires based on ones my wife and I had used during our sociolinguistic language surveys.[38] I instructed the surveyors on how to fill out the questionnaires in an interview setting. They then implemented the survey phase using the questionnaires between November 2013 and May 2014.

In addition to collecting information on sales and preferences, the questionnaires elicit information for classifying the responses according to age, sex, location, schooling, church affiliation, reading ability, and other interests. I believed this could help us better assess the community's Scripture Engagement needs and give us parameters for future translation materials. The scope of this thesis-project attempts to address the differences between print literacy and oral literature. I hope to critically compare the benefits and limitations of these two media types throughout the rest of this thesis. In the next section we take a brief look at the chapters to come.

C. OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

Following this introductory chapter of the problem and its setting, Chapter 2 looks at the biblical rationale for promoting the use of multiple media formats of Scripture as opposed to relying primarily on written materials. I show what the Bible says about its

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[38] Jürg Stalder, "Rapid Appraisal," *Notes on Literature in Use and Language Programs* 48, no. 6 (1996): 5–23. Stalder developed the interview-based questionnaires we used in the Sociolinguistic Survey Department of SIL Cameroon. Many of the questions on my questionnaire were drawn from his or inspired by them. We had experience using them on 26 languages for 18 months in the years 2000-2001.

own promotion, and how some of the biblical authors speak directly or indirectly about how to disseminate Scripture for evangelism and discipleship. I examine some logical and theological reasons for employing a variety of media, especially modified print and non-print media. I argue that the Bible, history, and common sense teach us to present God's Word in as many media and presentation formats as possible, provided they are appropriate to the context of the language communities they are destined to reach.

Chapter 3 gives a semi-historical overview of the literature on Scripture Engagement published during the last four decades. It focuses particularly on SE issues in the majority world, and West and Central Africa in particular.[39] I narrowed my discussion to sources that deal with media choice in translation work. My review highlights the changing philosophy of mission agencies and the terrain of mission work as we seek new strategies to engage target audiences with Scripture. Increasingly, current literature in global missions reflect a quickly shifting paradigm in the assumptions and practices of Western missionaries that more accurately addresses the realities of the people being served.

In Chapter 4, I explain the research methods used in this study—both qualitative and quantitative measurements. I used questionnaires to catalogue the number of products sold for each media format as well as anecdotal responses elicited during the interviews at the point of sale. This data is supplemented by reports from the surveyors on their own observations. Their reports include comments they heard from respondents which

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[39] Scripture Engagement is taking place in developed nations, but is characteristically different than Scripture Engagement in the developing nations.

were not recorded in the questionnaires, and which clarified many of the ambiguous

comments written in the questionnaires.

In Chapter 5, I present the results of this impact survey: how the Kwasio community

responded to the first Scripture products in their language. I summarize the comments

received from both respondents and surveyors. From the data collected, I draw

conclusions about the attitudes and desires of the population. I make recommendations

from the outcomes on how the Kwasio project members can improve the translation,

material distribution, and Scripture Engagement. I explain what I believe to be the

strengths and weaknesses of this thesis-project and what I would do differently. For

others who might wish to carry out a similar project in another context, I suggest some

modifications. I then propose potential areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2. WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS ABOUT ITSELF: A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

A. BIBLE TRANSLATION AND WRITTEN TEXTS

Introduction—Connection to Core Concepts

In the first chapter, I raised the issue of promoting the use of newly translated Scriptures—the media in which they are produced and how print-literacy has commonly been the first means of engaging the target audience. We Bible translators tend to think that, since the very source of our translation is a written document, the end product should be, first of all, a written document. As a result, we maintain this goal as our focus. Yet, when we look deeply into the Bible itself, we see evidence that it has a long history of orally transmitted messages. Over a period of centuries, the content of God's Word was written, then collected in the "Book-of-books"—the Bible. We will see from Scripture itself that the printed text has not been the sole means of communicating God's Word, nor should it necessarily be the primary means of communication today.

That God gave his message orally for decades before providing a written version leads us to consider the idea of communicating the translated Scriptures first and foremost in oral form, and then perhaps with written printed media. Biblical, theological, and historical studies also attest to the importance of alternatives to literacy in the dissemination of Judeo-Christian teachings. Pragmatic considerations in missiology, evangelism, and church planting also reveal the necessity and the efficacy of utilizing as many modes of communication as possible to transmit Scripture to its intended recipients. Numerous Bible references show that God never limited his self-

revelation to the printed page. Nor did God depend primarily on the literacy skills of his

audience to get his message across. Some of the content of the Hebrew Scriptures were

transmitted orally for decades, and possibly for centuries, before they were gathered

together in written form.[1] We know that the New Testament books were written

decades after the events of Jesus' life and the message he communicated orally. God

himself also *spoke* the ten commandments before he *wrote* them on stone tablets.[2] As

we will see in this chapter, many biblical passages describe God communicating to his

people through a myriad of communication channels. I will point out in more detail

some of the multiple oral messages, theophanies, real-life circumstances, and prophetic

dramatizations found in the Bible that were some of the presentation formats in which

it first came.

In the following sections we will peruse the Scriptures for answers to the questions:

(a) How do the biblical texts validate translation as a tool for disseminating God's Word;

and (b) How do the biblical texts endorse the use of varied and contextually relevant

media to communicate God's Word? I look at the Bible's characteristics—the kinds of

information it contains, the literary devices and genres it employs, and other techniques

it uses. I also point out some of the non-literary ways that God communicated

throughout the sacred text, as well as the Bible's role in Judeo-Christian faith and

practice. Additionally, I consider some theological justifications and practical arguments

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[1] We can imagine that the story of Adam and Eve may have been told for centuries until the Spirit moved on Moses to write it down for future generations.

[2] God dialogued with Moses throughout a 40-year period, before Scripture indicates God asking him to write anything down (Exod 3-24). God did not first write, then speak. Writing follows speaking.

for Scripture Engagement. First, I begin with a justification for translating the Bible into other languages.

Scriptural Testimony for Bible Translation

Many clergy and missionaries have endeavored to translate the Bible over the centuries; and their numbers have increased exponentially throughout the last century. Thousands of expatriate and national translators have been involved in Bible translation all over the world, some devoting their entire careers to this task. It is a long, arduous process, demanding significant training and intense effort. It is wrought with difficulties and has been witness to failed starts and a high rate of attrition. Why then should we put so much importance on translating the Bible into other languages?

The written Word of God is more than a description of who God is or what he has said.[3] It gives us a glimpse of his eternal nature and some of the enduring aspects of his message.[4] Christ is the physical manifestation of God and a living eternal being.[5] He himself is not a text that can be confined to the written page. Nevertheless, this Word as Person and message has also been expressed in finite human languages and cultures, given to us in written form. We maintain a printed copy to serve as a reference to the Word, however weak and imperfect the words are that embody this lesser and somewhat tangible form of "the Word".

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[3] Ps 138:2 "…For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (NKJV).

[4] 1 Cor 13:12 "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (NKJV).

[5] John 1:1-3, 14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.…And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (NKJV).

Genesis 11 tells us that humans spoke a single language at the beginning of time. When the Tower of Babel was built, God responded by creating multiple languages to hinder human plans to reach God in their own way. He introduced confusion into their communication and scattered them over the earth. Genesis 10 says that each family and nation spoke its own language. During the centuries which followed, God moved on his chosen people to write his message in two of those languages—Hebrew and Aramaic. Over the last three millennia, he has given to some of his followers the formidable task of translating the Scriptures into many of the languages they have encountered.

God also called the Hebrew people, through Isaiah, to bring his message to the other nations and languages.[6] Israelite history shows us that some of his people learned the languages of their neighbors.[7] After the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of Israel and Judah reached completion, God's people found themselves in places where they had learned the language of their "hosts", which in many cases was Greek. This is how it had become necessary over time for religious leaders among the Diaspora to translate the Septuagint during the third century B.C.[8] Many of the Jewish people of the Diaspora had spread throughout the Greek-speaking world during that time and could no longer access God's Word in its original languages. All of the Old Testament citations in the New Testament come from this Greek version, which had become more immediately

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[6] Isa 49:6, 66:18-19.

[7] Ezra 4:7 (NIV) reads, "The letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language." Neh 13:24 (NIV) says, "Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah." Isa 19:18 (NIV) states, "In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty. One of them will be called the City of the Sun."

[8] "The Septuagint," *The Scholarly Portal of the German Bible Society*, accessed April 4, 2016, https://www.academic-bible.com/en/home/scholarly-editions/septuagint/#c2480.

accessible to first century audiences than the Hebrew version. Not long after the

Christian Scriptures were established, the Church, too, endorsed the translation of the

Bible into other languages. In the first six centuries after Christ, the Bible had been

translated into eight other languages: Latin, Gothic, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian,

Ethiopic, and Sogdian.[9] Since then, people have seen the value of translating God's

Word into many other languages so that new audiences can understand his message.

Two of Judah's prophets went to God's people, explicitly stating that they came

speaking the language their audience knew, so that God's message would be

understood. God sent Ezekiel to his people to prophesy to them in their own language,

not "to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language" (Ezek 3:5-6 [NKJV]). Isaiah

33:19 echoes the same distinction between using a language they comprehend and one

of a "people whose speech is obscure, whose language is strange and

incomprehensible" (NIV). The apostle Paul attests, in 1 Corinthians 14:10-11, that each

language has meaning to the speakers of that language. Therefore, one must speak in a

language that people can understand, so that the hearer might receive some kind of

benefit and the speaker know he or she has been understood. By extension, if we are to

communicate God's message to others, it must be in a language that the hearer can

comprehend.

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[9] Bruce M. Metzger, "Important Early Translations of the Bible," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (March 1993): 35–49. Scripture was translated into at least seventeen more languages in the twelve-hundred years which followed (see http://www.wycliffe.net/BTT.html). The number of translations has risen exponentially since 1800, with Bibles in almost 400 languages and more than 1,000 testaments, according to the IBS (see http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/bible-faqs/how-many-different-languages-has-the-bible-been-translated-into/).

When Christ was crucified, the sign above the cross showing his title as 'King of the Jews' was written in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin, with the expectation that almost any observer would be able to read at least one of those languages. In Acts, the Holy Spirit moved in the first large gathering of Christians, glorifying God in at least 16 different languages (Acts 2:4-11). The crowd who heard them, were Jews on pilgrimage from all over the Roman world. Every one of them was presented the opportunity of hearing God's Word in their mother tongue.

Revelation 5:9 says that Jesus "purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (NIV). It is difficult to imagine how we would be able to see people from every tribe, language, people, and nation unless we bring God's message to them in a language they understand, one that can pass through their linguistic and cultural filter to reach their hearts. In order to fulfill this prophecy, Bible translation becomes a necessary task for the Church to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples of all.[10] In Acts 10: 34-35, 42 Peter responded to the other apostles, when they challenged his mission to the Gentiles, by declaring that God does not favor anyone, but called him to preach everywhere. Revelation 14:6 echoes Isaiah's prophecy, that God's message was intended for all people, so they would worship him as their Lord. Therefore, missionaries find it necessary to learn the languages of the people to whom God sends them.[11] It is a much more efficient use of time, resources, and manpower for a few missionaries to learn a second language, than for them to teach

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[10] Matt 29:19; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11; Rom 9.

[11] I restrict my definition of missionaries in this context to those who are sent to serve people groups who speak a language different than their own.

millions of people in a target audience a language they do not know. If the audience or the interlocutor does not speak the language in which a translation is available, then translation of Scripture into the vernacular becomes imperative.

It is clear from the examples above that Bible translation is endorsed by Scripture—both directly and indirectly. There are also some practical justifications for Bible translation. Churches need the Scriptures for evangelism and discipleship. Individual believers need to study the Scriptures for personal spiritual growth. Without these neither the individual, nor the collective body of church members, can mature in faith. Newly established Christian churches cannot hope their members to have any depth of character or witness without a Bible translation to accompany their own mission work.

Scripture records how the leaders of old world empires knew the importance of translating a message into people's mother tongue.[12] Equally, the secular leaders of our world today, in global business and government, continue to demonstrate how much they understand the importance of translation and interpretation of their own messages into another person's language.[13] Our mandate to disciple people has more eternal value than the activities of world leaders. It should be clear to us that we need to communicate with people in the language they understand best in order for them to

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[12] In the book of Esther, we read that the Persian King Ahasuerus recognized the necessity of writing to each people group in each province using their own language and script (Esth 1:22; 3:12; 8:9). The book of Daniel attests to the importance of language by the fact that King Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel and his three friends learn the language and literature of the Babylonians (Dan 1:4). Their pagan captors knew the power and importance of language, culture, and writing, so their captives would understand their own message.

[13] The hiring of professional interpreters is big business in world politics, in such organizations as the United Nations and the European Union.

grasp the message we carry to them—God's Word. In the next section, I present some

biblical evidence for having the Word of God in written form.

Scripture—Testimony for its Written Form

When we refer to the Bible as "Scripture," we are highlighting its characteristic as a

written text.[14] Israelite history and identity as a distinctive people began with the

institution of the Hebrew religion through the act of God himself writing his Ten

Commandments on two stone tablets.[15] Moses said, "The LORD gave me two stone

tablets inscribed by the finger of God" (Deut 9:10 [NIV]). Once they entered the land of

Israel, the Hebrew people were instructed to make God's Word physically permanent:

"…set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of

this law…" (Deut 27:2-3 [NIV]). At other times, God told Moses to write down the words

that he had previously spoken to him (Exod 34:27); and he gave Joshua the task of

recording his message in the "Book of the Law of God" (Josh 24:26).

Written texts are another means of giving permanence to God's Word and

reinforcing the authority of its message.[16] Having God's Word in written form also

provides the opportunity for many more people in a wide geographical area to benefit

from a message that is uttered at one moment, in a particular place. In Revelation 1:11,

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[14] Referring to the Bible as the "Word of God," highlights its characteristic as a spoken message, when not referring to Jesus.

[15] Exod 32:16; Deut 4:13.

[16] The existence of Scripture as printed text has made it more authoritative, lending it more power and prestige. This can accomplish two different ends: either it will aggrandize the Word of God or legitimize false messages. On the other hand, people with evil intentions have exploited this power of written communication to transmit misinformation. Sometimes this miscommunication is done in opposition to God's authoritative document. Jeremiah 8:8 alludes to disreputable scribes who attempted to mislead with their own writing of the Law.

John records: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches—to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea" (NIV).

Jesus mentions the Scriptures repeatedly, referring to the written biblical text 19 times in Matthew's Gospel.[17] Luke records a total of 27 references to the written text in his Gospel and Acts. Paul cites the written text more than 50 times in the epistles. Romans 15:4 tells us "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning..." (NKJV). In 2 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul writes, "...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures..." (NIV). We see that the Bible continually draws attention to itself as a written text. For the New Testament authors, the written Word was not simply important, but indispensable.[18] Besides inspiring his followers to create a physical copy of his message, God also instructs readers how to use it: read it aloud to each other.

B. SCRIPTURE—TESTIMONY FOR ORAL-AURAL COMMUNICATION

Reading the Written Text Aloud—Hearing the Word

There is a great deal of testimony that the Word of God is to be spoken, or read aloud, so that it can be heard. The people of Israel depended on a small group of prophets who could hear instruction from God and from whom they, in turn, could hear what God had to say to them personally (Num 24:16). Jeremiah 36 gives the account of a message from God spoken to Jeremiah, who dictated it to Baruch, who transcribed the

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[17] The Scriptures are referred to (most often by "It is written") 22 times in Rom; and in 1 & 2 Cor (18x), Gal (8x), Eph (2x), 1 & 2 Tim (4x), and Heb (3x).

[18] The written Word should not be idolized, as though it has power in itself, the way some religious people treat sacred texts as fetishes. Jesus admonished the Pharisees on several occasions against idolizing the Scriptures and trying to find life in the text itself.

words in a scroll and read them aloud to the people assembled at the Temple. Then, the scroll was sent and read to the King's officials, who read it to the King.

There are many more verses in the Bible which instruct God's people to read the Bible aloud publicly than those which suggest reading them individually for personal use. In some cases, others cannot, or will not, read for themselves. The scarcity and cost of books, coupled with low literacy, made personal reading of Scripture difficult. These conditions could explain why numerous passages gave orders for Israel's leaders to read the Book of the Law aloud to the people.[19] Deuteronomy 31:11 states, "Then Moses commanded them: '…when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing'" (NIV). In addition to reading the Word aloud, Nehemiah 8:8 states that the Levites "read from the Book of the Law of God making it clear [*translating*] and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read" (NIV).[20]

In New Testament times, it was the practice to read the Scriptures aloud at synagogue gatherings, as Jesus himself did: "as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16 [NKJV]). The apostle Paul did the same.[21] In his letter to Timothy, he wrote "…devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture…" (1 Tim 4:13 [NIV]). In Revelation 1:3 the apostle John said,

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[19] The 'Book of the Law' is also referred to as the 'Book of the Covenant' and the 'Book of Moses'. Exod 24:7; Josh 8:34; 2 Kgs 22-23; Neh 9:3; 13:1

[20] A note on this verse in the NIV offers "translation" as an alternative or synonym for "clear."

[21] Paul read from the Law and the Prophets, during his travels to numerous synagogues (Acts 13:15).

"Blessed *is* he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it…!" (NKJV).

Throughout the Gospels and Acts we learn that God's message was told through Jesus, passed on to the apostles, and passed on again by word of mouth through other disciples. Hebrews reiterates the hearing of God's Word— "We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard…which was first announced by the Lord, [and] was confirmed to us by those who heard him."[22] In Romans 10:17, Paul says, "So faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (NKJV).[23] The people of Berea first heard an oral presentation of Paul's message, before searching the written Scriptures (Acts 17:11). It seems that God's message was meant to reach its audience more often through oral-auditory channels than by means of literacy.[24]

Although Jesus and the New Testament authors make numerous references to the written Scriptures, they do not stress reading the Bible for ourselves.[25] In contrast, only two examples of individuals reading it can be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses gave instructions for the future king of Israel to read a copy of the Law for himself every day (Deut 17:18-19). Isaiah tells his audience to "Look in the scroll of the Lord, and

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[22] Heb 2:1, 3 (NIV).

[23] It is worth noting that he did not say "faith comes by reading the word of God", although this can happen. Perhaps God has always assumed low literacy; or he knows that hearing the word spoken aloud reinforces understanding more than mere reading. One might also argue that the spoken word has power, just as God spoke creation into being.

[24] Literacy is a visual, but more analytic activity than other distinctively visual media, consisting of motion, still images, video, visual arts, or physical performances that are not reading-based vision.

[25] Very few biblical passages suggest or imply personal reading of Scripture. The concept of a person reading the Bible silently on their own is a fairly modern, somewhat Western, cultural practice. It is not a biblical mandate, but only one method out of many for immersion in God's Word. Therefore, we should not expect people in other cultures to take on this value as we do.

read…" (Isa 34:16 [NIV]). In the New Testament, on the other hand, we can find numerous allusions to reading the Word. Matthew's Gospel records seven instances where Jesus asked his listeners whether or not they had read the Scriptures.[26]

Throughout the Bible, the writers stress the need to impart its content through reading and listening. We saw numerous passages giving instruction to read God's Word aloud. In this section, we learned that God made sure we have his Word in written form—so that his people could read it aloud in the hearing of others. Let us look at some other testimony from the Bible for its oral proclamation.

Scripture—Testimony for Verbal Communication Only

First and foremost, God's message is spoken; hence the descriptive phrase "Word of God", which highlights its verbal nature. In the garden of Eden, the Lord's first communication to Adam was a verbal command, followed by dialogue with both humans after Eve was created.[27] Moses, too, first heard God call to him from the burning bush (Exod 3:4). At the beginning of the prophet Samuel's apprenticeship, the young boy heard God's voice for the first time. Eli the priest asked him, "'What was it he said to you? Do not hide…anything he told you'" (1 Sam 3:17 [NIV]). The phrase 'Word of God' is typically paired with some form of 'say' as we read in 1 Chronicles 17:3, "But that night the word of God came to Nathan, saying…" (NIV).

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[26] Matt 12:3, 5, 19:4, 21:16, 42, 22:31, 24:51. Yet, he never specifies whether he is implying public or personal reading in those passages.

[27] Genesis 2:16-17, 3:10-19.

In the New Testament, God's Word is also a spoken message as Jesus' ministry showed. It was comprised entirely of oral teachings. In the first century, God sent apostles and prophets also to spread his message primarily by oral-aural means.[28] his disciples were sent out to preach orally in Luke 10. The first gathering of Christ's disciples after his ascension was witness to oral proclamations of his message: "…they spoke the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). Hebrews 1:1-2 reminds us that Jesus communicated the Good News verbally, "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…" (NIV).

Scripture is, thus, simply the composition of innumerable spoken messages in textual form. God and his servants communicated his words orally, then wrote them down. Subsequently, they also give instruction to re-communicate them orally, so that others can hear the messages as though God is speaking them anew. At the dedication of newly translated Scriptures around the world, we hear someone say each time, "God speaks my language."[29] It is a phrase repeated by many people who receive the Word of God in their mother tongue for the first time.

C. BIBLICAL TESTIMONY FOR SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

However, it is not enough to translate the written text. Scripture must be propagated through evangelism and discipleship as well.[30] In order to transmit the

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[28] Oral refers to the faculty of speech, while aural refers to listening, that is, the hearing faculty.

[29] Though the translation is written, we never hear anyone say, "God wrote to me in my language."

[30] My use of the word "discipleship" implies SE. Discipleship entails spiritual growth in the knowledge and application of the Scriptures. Jesus' words in Matt 28:19 are the starting point for this.

message, one cannot rely solely on reading or speaking for disseminating Scripture; but one should look for other means, including visual media. The biblical passages presented in the following section, I believe, demonstrate that God himself used other means besides reading and speaking in order to communicate his message. Likewise, his followers should also go beyond the written and spoken Word of God, aiming for communication that capitalizes on as many forms as possible to reach their intended audiences. They continually need to give expression to the Scriptures in dynamic ways that are adapted to the time and culture of the recipients.

What compels us to expend the extra time and energy that Scripture Engagement requires, for making God's Word accessible to people in ways other than written form? Historically, Scripture Engagement has followed Bible Translation, but people involved in the BT movement are increasingly seeing Bible Translation embedded within Scripture Engagement. Starting from the perspective of how to engage people with Scripture helps us to determine what kind of translation products are needed.

The Creator himself used, in one way or another, nearly every resource he had created, in the earthly and heavenly realms, to reach people with his message and draw them to himself. In fact, all his activity in the world is aimed at communicating his Word to humans. We see that God has presented himself to man in a variety of ways since the beginning of time. David tells us that nature communicates messages about God: "The heavens declare the glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands, day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech;

they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their *voice* goes into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."[31]

From the creation account to the book of Revelation, God reveals himself in a variety of ways. He has used the authors of the Bible to communicate his message through diverse literary genres: historical narratives, biographies, poetry, songs, liturgical instructions, procedural descriptions, journalistic writing, news reporting, expository theological treatises, hortatory prophetic warnings, persuasive speech, dialogue, prayers, proverbs, parables, and letters.[32] In addition to this wide variety of categories, there are all kinds of themes: romance, politics, crime, comedy, adventure, suspense, tragedy, mystery, and scandal involving adultery, deception, or lies.[33] Mixed in with these literary genres and themes, the Bible authors also utilized dozens of literary devices. Some of the devices we find are: alliteration, assonance, analogies, anecdote, anthropomorphisms, archetypes, chiasmus, flashback and foreshadow, imagery—both real and fantastical, irony, metaphors, symbolism, similes and hyperbole as well as understatement, personification, and rhetorical questions. The simple presence of all

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[31] Ps 19:1-4 (NIV).

[32] I have seen the biblical books grouped together as: historical, poetic (including wisdom, songs, and lamentations), and prophetic books. In the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy I find law and procedural descriptions for construction; in Leviticus and Numbers I see instruction for religious rites and finances. Within any of these books are mixed passages of other genres. In the New Testament again I see news reporting and narrative in the Gospels, interspersed with exposition, parables, dialogue, and biography. The Acts are journalistic; and naturally the epistles contain letters and several other discourse types.

[33] I have seen many of these themes throughout the Scriptures. A few examples are: Laban's deceptions in Genesis, Samson's numerous scandals, anger, and tragedy in Judges; romance in the Song of Solomon; murder of Cain by Abel in Genesis; wars in Joshua; and political crimes of the kings in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles.

these literary genres, themes, and devices tells us that God inspired the Bible writers to avail themselves of every literary communication tool at their disposal.[34]

Beyond the literary categories, elements, and techniques, God further brought his message to life by communicating through a myriad of physical manifestations and situations. The biblical text reveals that God employed dreams,[35] visions, Urim and Thummim,[36] angelic appearances[37], and allegorical dramatizations by prophets using people or props to enact a present message from God or to foreshadow future events.[38] Ezekiel's ministry involved dramatic simulations of Israel's unfaithfulness and uncleanness.[39] We see examples of imagery expressed in the creation account with the serpent in the Garden of Eden, which represented the devil and the source of sin (Gen 1-3). For Abram, God first approached him by visual and oral means: "After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision…" (Gen 15:1 [NIV]). God gave Jacob and Joseph some very vivid dreams of stairs leading to heaven with angels ascending and

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[34] While I could give examples of each of these literary phenomena, I think the point of the discussion is made here that the communicative variety contained in the Bible nearly exhausts the possibilities in existence from the earliest time to its final written form.

[35] God attests to communicating through dreams—Gen 20:3-6, 28:12, 31:10, 11, 37:5-11, 40:5-9, 41:1-32; Num 12:6; Judg 7:13-15; 1 Sam 28:6; 1 Kgs 3:5; Is 1:1ff., Dan 1:17, 2:1-45; Joel 2:28; Matt 1:20, 2:12, 2:12-22, 27:19.

[36] Gen 15:1, 46:2; Num. 12:6, 24:4, 16 (trance); 1 Sam 3:15; 2 Sam 7:17; 1 Chr 17:15; 2 Chr 26:5; Ps 89:19; Is 1:1; Ezek 1:1, 8:3, 11: 24, 13:16, 21:29, 22:28, 40:2, 43:3; Dan 1:17, 2:28, 4:5-13, 7:1-15, 8:1-27, 10:1-16; Hos 12:10; Joel 2:28; Hab 2:2; Matt 17:1-7; Luke 1:22, 24:23; Acts 9:10-12, 10:3-19, 11:5, 16:9-10, 18:9; Rev 9:17.

[37] Gen 16:9-11, 21:17, 22:11, 15; Num 22:32-35; Acts 12:9; Judg 2:1, 4, 5:23, 6:11-12, 20-22, 13:3-21; 1Kgs 13:18, 19:5-7; 1Chr 21:18.

[38] Jeremiah breaks a clay jar to warn Judah of the doom to come (Jer 19). Jeremiah makes a yoke and chains to signify the capture and submission of King Zedekiah by the Babylonians (Jer 27). Hosea took Gomer as wife for the purpose of God literally representing Israel's infidelity. In Acts 21:10-11 the prophet Agabus binds himself with Paul's belt to show how Paul would be delivered to the Gentiles

[39] See Ezek 4:1-12 and 5:1-4, for examples of God's instructions to act out a living prophecy.

descending, and about sheaves and planetary bodies bowing down.[40] He appeared to

the people of the Exodus in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire (Exod 14:19).

There are an incredible number of other non-literary and even non-oral ways that

God communicated to his people throughout the centuries. Celebration of the feasts

instituted by God stand as a memorial to his mighty acts on behalf of his people.[41] God

gave physical signs in nature such as the flood, the burning bush, the rainbow, and other

weather phenomena such as thunder and lightning as the voice of God's glory.[42] He

gives baptism as a physical symbol to communicate several spiritual truths.[43] The Bible

speaks lessons through the miracles done in the lives of Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the

healings that Jesus performed, and the resurrection of Jesus himself.[44] It also gives

accounts of divine physical appearances to Abraham, Jacob, Samson's mother, Balaam,

and the disciples.[45]

In the previous section of this chapter we perused many verses that describe reading

and listening to the Word of God. In this section, we have seen that the Word of God

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[40] Gen 28:12; 37.

[41] Much of the imagery from the feasts originated from what Israel lived through during the exodus from Egypt and their wanderings in the desert. Exod 12:17, 23:14-16, 34:18-25; Lev 23; Num 15:3, 29:12, 39; Deut 16, 31:10. Items in the Ark of the Covenant—some manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets—were a physical testimony of God's great acts and his messages of promise to his people (Heb 9:4). The sacrificial system of the Tabernacle (and the first Temple) described in the Pentateuch are pictures of heavenly things (Heb 9:23). The Tabernacle is described in Exod 25-27, 35-40 and again in Num 1, 3-5, 7-11, 17-19, 31. Details of the first Temple are found in 1 Kgs 5-10.

[42] Gen 6:17, 7:6-17, 9:13-16; Exod 2:3-4, 9:23, 19:19; 2 Sam 22:14; 2 Kgs 4 :32-5, 6:5-7; Job 37:4; Isa 29:6.

[43] Mark 1:4, 10:39; Col 2:12; 1 Pet 3:20-21;

[44] Exod 7-11; 1 Kgs 17, 18:25-46; 2 Kgs 1:10-12, 2:1-14; Matt 4:24, 15:32-8, 27:53; John 2:6-11; Heb 2:4. Jesus' teachings were expressed through miracles, such as the feeding of the 5,000—though his disciples did not always understand the message in this form.

[45] These theophanies or Christophanies appear in Genesis 18:1-3, 22-33, 28:12, 31:11, 32:24-30; Numbers 22:22-35; Judges 13:3-6; Mark 9:2-7.

was something lived out in a variety of experiences, which were physical, visual, or both.

Deuteronomy 4:9 tells the people of Israel to recall the things that they had seen: "Only

be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes

have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your

children and to their children after them" (NIV). Even when it comes to the written

Word, God did not limit himself to scrolls, codices, or books. He encouraged his people

to teach their children about the things they had *seen*, not the things they had *read*.[46] In

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NIV) we read,

> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.
> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home
> and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get
> up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.
> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

God's instructions in these passages led to the creation of the Jewish phylacteries,

visual reminders of his words.[47] It leaves us with the image that the Word should

permeate all of our daily activities. That is, we should transmit and communicate it by

every means available, to saturate one's own heart with the Word and to get that

message out to others.

Jeremiah literally "ate" God's words (Jer 15:16).[48] Again, an angel tells John the

apostle to eat a scroll (Rev 10:9-10). The act of eating the scroll symbolized the need for

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[46] The NIV uses the word "teach" for the key idea of transmitting the Scripture to the next generation. The Hebrew gives the sense of "make them known" rather that the idea of "reading" it, according to the gloss in BART. Paul O'Rear et al., *Biblical Analysis Research Tool* (Dallas: SIL International, 1998).

[47] Some say it is an excessively literal interpretation of this precept. Verses in the Gospels suggest that Jesus wore the same phylacteries and tassels on his cloak as the Pharisees did: Matthew 9:20, 14:36, 23:5.

[48] The Lord also told Ezekiel to eat a scroll containing a message for the people of Israel (Ezek 2:9-3:3).

these prophets to internalize God's message before delivering it to his people. In the New Testament, Colossians 3:16 says "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (NKJV). Paul wrote that "the Word of God lives in you" (1 John 2:14 [NIV]). So, we are compelled to look for ways to make it come alive through our behavior. Paul sets an example for believers when he says "I have become all things to all people *so* that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:22b [NIV]). Paul's main strategy for spreading the message was to go into synagogues and open places where theological and philosophical discussions were already taking place. He spoke there using the methods and opportunities of that era. Jesus' parables, too, were not simply a genre of literature or discourse; they were life-like stories filled with imagery that fit naturally within the Hebrew culture of that time. We can apply this to many ministry situations as a directive that we should look for creative ways to contextualize the biblical message.

The Word of God is active; and it is about God's actions in the world (1 Kgs 13:5). Jeremiah 1:12 reiterates the performative nature of God's Word: "Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I Am ready to perform My word'" (NKJV).[49] According to Matthew 25:35-6, practical Christianity is a ministry of outreach as Jesus described, "for I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I *was* naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me" (NKJV). Thus, we are encouraged to make the Word of Christ a living message through word and deed.

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[49] Scripture Engagement work epitomizes the performative aspect of God's Word as it endeavors to see lives transformed.

In sum, Scripture Engagement should be multi-faceted so that it can maximize the greatest number of appropriate forms of presentation. We have seen in God's Word many reasons to investigate a diverse array of approaches to Scripture Engagement. Now, I turn to a few theological and practical rationales that encourage us to add, not only oral methods of communication, but many other media.

D. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALES FOR MULTI-FACETED SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

There are theological and practical considerations that lean toward a preference for oral communication of Scripture. The Jewish people, Jesus, and his disciples lived in an environment where orality reigned. We know that Jesus left his own words unwritten, trusting the community of believers with his words only in their hearts and minds, to be passed on by word of mouth. He had the confidence that they would perpetuate the living word orally.[50] He trusted the church to discover the meaning of his words and interpret them for a wide variety of situations that he had not discussed. As a result, the early church grew and advanced before there was ever a written New Testament.[51]

The linguistic environment in first century Palestine, based on Herbert Klem's observations, was similar to what one finds in much of sub-Saharan Africa—multilingualism, two primary vehicular languages, and a relatively large population of non-literates.[52] According to Klem, literacy in Greek was restricted to the ruling

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[50] Herbert V. Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture: Insights from African Oral Art* (Pasadena, Calif: W. Carey Library Publishers, 1982), 85.

[51] Viggo Søgaard, *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel* (Pasadena, Calif: W. Carey Library, 1993), 170–1.

[52] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, 61–9, 72. Klem's comment is derived from his work in Nigeria which I applied to neighboring Cameroon, and may be true for much of sub-Saharan Africa.

authorities and a minority of educated Jews; and only a limited number of religious

leaders were literate in Hebrew. He goes on to say that the non-literate masses were

taught orally in Aramaic; and if some people in the lower classes of society appeared to

be literate, it was because they selected passages to read with which they were already

familiar. It was not until the gospel spread throughout the Mediterranean world that it

was written down for Greek-speaking literates.

Biblical scholars have been analyzing the text of the Bible for decades, discovering

many oral characteristics.[53] They continue to confirm that the Hebrew Scriptures were

passed down orally for many centuries before they were reduced to writing. In contrast,

New Testament texts were composed and consolidated in codex format by the second

or third centuries after their annunciation.[54] However, the Church could not limit itself

to using copied manuscripts as their primary means of instruction. It had to develop

other means of transmitting Scriptural truths to a burgeoning body of illiterate

believers. Historically, the Church rarely relied on literacy, as Eastern Orthodoxy and

Roman Catholic churches attest with their iconology to depict biblical scenes and

characters, because a majority of religious adherents were illiterate for much of the

Church's history. There were statues, paintings, architecture, stained glass, and other

artifacts or relics. We can still take our cue from them by using oral means and other

visual or physical media wherever possible, since literates are still a minority in many

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[53] Robert C. Culley, "Oral Tradition and Biblical Studies," *Oral Tradition* 1, no. 1 (1986): 30–1, 56–60.

[54] Peter M. Head, "The Gospel of Mark in Codex Sinaiticus: Textual and Reception-Historical Considerations," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 13 (2008): 1, accessed April 6, 2016, http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/vol13/Head2008.pdf; T. C. Skeat, "The Origin of the Christian Codex," in *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik*, vol. Bd. 102 (Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1994), 263–4, accessed April 6, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20189148.pdf?_=1459972717550.

parts of the world, and where much of the literate world increasingly prefers other media above print.

In contemporary Western society, pastors and Bible teachers have stressed the use of the written Word for generations and encouraged daily personal Bible reading.[55] Yet, our Bibles often contain pictures, drawings, and maps to help us understand the text they accompany. Only since the advent of audio Bibles and a proliferation of Bible-based movies and documentaries on film do we see people increasingly taking advantage of non-print media in Western society. For generations, our modern churches have been exploiting the use of drama, video, pictures, song, and dance (for some) to supplement public reading and preaching. In contrast, the majority of believers in Cameroon continue to access the Bible primarily in printed form. Church members rely on preachers to transmit its content to them, since very few can or will read it regularly on their own.

There are many illiterates who will never learn to read adequately enough to understand Scripture at a level which benefits them. In other words, very few will reach a functional literacy (by current definitions of the term) where their reading allows them to interact with God's Word in a meaningful way. They will likely depend on a literate minority who can read it to them, as people did in the time of the prophet Isaiah.[56] "The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one who is literate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I cannot, for it *is*

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[55] The digitally formatted Bibles on our electronic devices are still a form of "printed" text.
[56] They are at the mercy of the reader to communicate the message honestly.

sealed'" (Isa 29:11, [NKJV]). It is, therefore, necessary to provide the means for them to hear the Word of God orally, in church, through audio devices, dramatized by live actors and storytellers, or through images on film.

In the next chapter, we look more closely at the discussions that have taken place in mission settings regarding the interplay of literacy, orality, and technology that can propagate both of these media types.

CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW: SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

This chapter reviews the literature on Scripture Engagement, tracing the historical development of this field. I have organized the sections to reveal the shift in philosophy and practice of missionaries concerned with SE among languages with recently translated Scripture. This overview of the literature describes old strategies, some of the major changes over the past century, and a sampling of the Scripture Engagement trends currently in operation. It is arranged roughly along two lines: chronological and modes of communication. Within this domain of activity, religious workers have sought to maximize the Bible's impact. Over time, the need for new approaches has arisen, because earlier ones were less successful than originally hoped; and new technologies are always appearing.

A. INTRODUCTION: SCRIPTURE PROMOTION & IMPACT, THEN & NOW

In Chapter 1, I stated that our ultimate goal in the ministry of Bible translation is to see individual lives and communities transformed. God's Word is a vital part of that transformation—indispensable for evangelism and discipleship (Mt. 28:19). We are not satisfied with church growth measured only by the number of converts. We long to see people maturing in faith, resulting in churches that are growing in depth and quality, and replete with believers engaging in Scripture. This aspiration is expressed in SIL's first End policy on "Access to and use of Scripture and related materials," which states our goal: "In this and every generation, language communities worldwide have access to Scripture and related materials in the languages that serve them well. Individuals and

communities of believers are engaging with them for personal growth and in

transforming their society."[1] This vision for seeing the Scriptures put into use has

resulted in the tremendous growth of Scripture Engagement (SE) in many church-

planting missions and Bible translation organizations, such as SIL and the Bible Societies.

Numerous ministries have been spawned in SE; websites have been created exclusively

for SE; and Scripture Engagement articles and books are proliferating.[2]

Wayne Dye can be credited with catalyzing the discussion of the Scripture

Engagement movement in the Wycliffe and SIL family of organizations. In 1980, he

published *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*.[3] It is a

seminal work about the interplay between translated Bible texts and their use—

investigating the best materials and means for communicating them effectively in order

to promote spiritual growth. Dye's book represents the first major research on Scripture

Engagement activities. Since its appearance, he has been the foremost contributor to

Scripture Engagement in mission work.

In an article titled "The Nature of SIL ministry: two models," Dye presents two

generally accepted models of ministry running concurrently in the philosophy and

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[1] Robinson, "SIL International Board Policy Manual," *Insite Wiki*, (November 2013): End A, https://www.wiki.insitehome.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=15206916.

[2] The Forum of Bible Agencies International (FOBAI) is made up of more than 25 organizations that collaborate on the website scripture-engagement.org, as well as their own webpages devoted to Scripture Engagement: including the Bible Societies, the Bible Leagues, Hosanna/Faith Comes by Hearing, Jesus Film, Lutheran Bible Translators, One Hope, Open Doors, Pioneer Bible Translators, Scripture Union, SIL International, Wycliffe Global Alliance, Crossway, New Tribes Mission, SIM International, Mars Hill Productions, and Taylor University Center for Scripture Engagement. Orality and storying websites abound, such as IMB, OneStory, Storyrunners, and Int'l Orality Network (orality.net).

[3] T. Wayne Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact* (Dallas: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1985), 103. He presents SE research on languages in the Philippines, PNG, and Mexico.

practice of SIL translators: *product* and *process.*[4] The *product model* is an indirect type of

ministry where translators and Scripture Engagement workers focus primarily on

producing the translated Scriptures in print (and sometimes audio formats). They then

make them available to churches, para-church ministries, and other missions on whom

they rely to do the direct work of evangelizing and discipling, using Bible portions as a

tool in those activities. In the *process model*, on the other hand, the translator has a

vision for being involved in both translation and the direct ministry of seeing Scripture

products read, heard, and integrated into the lives of individuals and churches. Process-

model translators do not consider their job to be complete until Scripture Engagement

activities are well-established; and it is initiated well before the translation is published.

Members within SIL have been comfortable working within either of these two

frameworks. I am convinced that we should be committed to the latter, and never

consider the first model at the risk of leaving our task unfinished.

In *Oral Communication of Scripture—Insights from African Oral Art*, missionary and

seminary professor Herbert Klem traces a cursory history of missions in Africa from the

19th century to the end of the 20th century.[5] He says that, within that era, mission

strategy made literacy a prerequisite to church membership and a requirement for

learning the Word of God. From the 1930s to the 1970s, Scripture Engagement

consisted primarily of promoting printed Scripture through literacy. During that time,

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[4] T. Wayne Dye, "The Nature of SIL Ministry: Two Models," *Notes on Scripture in Use and Language Programs*, no. 33 (September 1992): 10–11. SIL's literacy work is usually considered an indirect, secular activity, not direct ministry.

[5] Herbert V. Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture: Insights from African Oral Art* (Pasadena, Calif: W. Carey Library Publishers, 1982), 26–33.

missionaries assumed that it was the ideal means for communicating Bible knowledge. He says that, even though missions have grown to accept indigenous language as a vehicle for communicating biblical truths, they still rely upon the predominant Western mode of communication: print media and literacy.

In the last few decades we have witnessed an incremental shift in mission focus aiming to exploit more indigenous modes of communication. In Scripture Engagement activities since the last quarter of the twentieth century, there has been a burgeoning of oral media and other non-print media, especially Bible-storying approaches. As new technologies came into existence in the 1960s, some Christian workers capitalized on using cassette tapes to promote Scripture. Still, others have made attempts to incorporate music and drama. We will look at these and other innovations being developed, tested, and implemented in an increasing number of projects as missions learn to adapt their practice to match the needs, values, and desires of their audiences.

B. *LITERATURE ON TRADITIONAL SCRIPTURE USE: LITERACY*

We read in much of the literature, that the modern missionary movement has relied on literacy in their work of evangelism, church-planting, discipleship, and education. Scripture supports this to some extent, since it records God's command to create a written copy of his Word to be read and spoken aloud. For this reason, our starting point has been the printed text.[6] Literacy has, thus, provided access to this bible text for

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[6] We will only see the Bible text as our starting point, if we ignore other ways the gospel has been communicated by the church. There is also church tradition, liturgy, ritual, art, architecture, and word-of-mouth that have been teachers of doctrine and practice over the centuries. In evangelicalism, the latter communication modes pale in comparison to the value and importance of the Scriptures.

Israelites, Jews, and Christians for thousands of years. The literature on Scripture

Engagement below elucidates the benefits and necessity of print literacy.

Positive Aspects of Literacy

Literacy is a beneficial skill, a key that can unlock literature: Scripture and Bible

helps, as well as information that can be useful to the entire community, such as books

on health and community development. Literacy can also open doors for employment

and economic advancement. In *Media in Church and Mission*, Danish missiologist Viggo

Søgaard describes a number of the benefits of print literacy. Unlike Herbert Klem, who

minimizes the utility of literacy in mission contexts, Søgaard believes that literacy can

provide multiple advantages to people in hearing-dominant societies.[7] For those who

acquire literacy, the following list gives his inventory of the possible gains that can be

had: it stimulates individuality, cultivates logical and linear thinking, encourages

objectivity, enables the handling of greater abstractions, inspires self-satisfaction,

fosters self-discipline in learning, utilizes a wide variety of symbols, and provides

relaxation. Apparent qualities such as these, may not always be positive even in our

Western cultures, and would probably be regarded even less favorably in the majority

world. Søgaard seems to be overstating the positive aspects of literacy, without listing

the most obvious: that literacy has the capacity to recover lost memory, thus enabling

literates to recall previously learned (heard or read) details that were forgotten.

Anthropologist Jack Goody wrote prolifically on language, writing, literacy, and orality.

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[7] Viggo Søgaard, *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel* (Pasadena, Calif: W. Carey Library, 1993), 179–80.

In his article "Alternative Paths to Knowledge in Oral and Literate Cultures," he offers another more plausible benefit: learning through books and writing allows people to educate themselves independently, without the need for a teacher.[8] It can provide the means for people to advance themselves when they lack other resources and educational opportunities.

Gilbert Ansre, a UBS translation consultant from Ghana, summed up many of his insights about literacy and orality on the African continent, in an article titled "The Crucial Role of Oral-Scripture: Focus Africa."[9] Like Søgaard and Goody, he too praises the benefits of literacy as much as he criticizes its limitations. He identifies several more advantages of print media: "graphology ensures high textual faithfulness to the form and content of the message" which "cannot be said for orally transmitted text." He states that written texts resist deviation over time, thereby enabling us to get closer to the original manuscripts. He affirms that printed Scripture long outlasts the spoken word. Ansre asserts, "written Scripture has reached more people in more places than oral transmission." Thanks to their durability, printed texts have aided in the dissemination of the salvation message even in non-literate parts of the world.

In *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, Wayne Dye talks about the varying degrees of motivation people have for literacy. He discovered that Christians are twice as likely to value literacy as non-believers.[10] Literacy best reaches

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[8] Jack Goody, "Alternative Paths to Knowledge in Oral and Literate Cultures," in *Spoken and Written Language: Advances in Discourse Processes*, ed. Deborah Tannen (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1982), 114.

[9] Gilbert Ansre, "The Crucial Role of Oral-Scripture: Focus Africa," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 2 (June 1995): 65, http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/12_2_PDFs/02_Ansre.pdf.

[10] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 225.

those who recognize their need for it, who want it, and are most likely to use that skill to serve others in their communities—foremost for sharing the Scriptures with believers and then with non-believers. This is why Bible-based literacy in churches is promoted in most of the communities where Bible translation is done.

The literature I reviewed in this section shows us the benefits of literacy as a tool in Scripture Engagement. Literacy provides access to print materials; and those printed materials can help guard a translated message intact for as long as the physical text survives. When spoken communication is recorded in print, people can refer back to it when memory fails. Texts may also convey information in the absence of a teacher or messenger. Print literacy has been a valuable resource throughout history wherever it was available. The authors I cited, say that it can yield positive results, when people are motivated to read the Scriptures, seeing that the benefit is worth the effort. Having a relationship with Jesus Christ is the most significant factor creating a desire to read the Word of God. We have learned that literacy can be successful if other conditions are met: printed Scripture comes in a format that is appealing, accessible, and affordable; and it is used in community with others.

According to these authors, literacy has been an asset for churches, Christians, and missions. These same authors not only laud the benefits of literacy, but also expound on the challenges and limitations of literacy if it is used as the principal medium of Scripture Engagement. Despite the benefits, literacy also has many potential pitfalls. In the next section, I review some of the literature that deals with those limitations.

Negative Aspects of Literacy—Worldview, Logistics, & Lifestyle

Differences of Worldview

Professor of missions, Herbert Klem, shared his expertise on literacy and orality in mission contexts in his book, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*.[11] In that book, he comments on the long tradition in mission work of using literacy to access Scripture. Much of his discussion centers on a critique of literacy in missions—often sounding like a reproof. He states that those involved in mission work expect that churches will grow, because congregations will be composed of disciples who are studious Bible-readers. Based on this assumption, the educational philosophy of most mission programs is built on the idea that Christians will take their own initiative to read regularly. Klem contends that the communication strategy we use will select our audience. In other words, if we choose literacy as our mode of communication, we select readers and by consequence de-select illiterates.

Bible translation organizations, as with other missions, emphasized Scripture-reading as an indispensable means for accomplishing the final goal of their mission: to cultivate spiritual growth. The next logical step was to develop the requisite skill of literacy for reading those Scriptures. All this seems obvious to missionaries who generally come from cultures where reading is an integral part of daily life, illiteracy is rare, and a good quality of life is difficult without the ability to read. Furthermore, missionaries serving Bible agencies typically come from an educated segment of society that places an even higher value on literacy and intense study through books than the

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[11] Herbert V. Klem, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies* (Nairobi, Kenya: Daystar Communications, 1978), 1–2, accessed April 7, 2016, http://doi.wiley.com/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1978 .tb01281.x.

average person in their home country. We naturally, but rather falsely, suppose that

others will internalize and apply biblical teachings by personal Bible reading as we do.

One natural consequence of these differences is a discontinuity in the value and

importance of literacy between Western missionary culture and the majority world

culture.[12] In "The Crucial Role of Oral Scripture: Focus Africa," Gilbert Ansre sums up this

dilemma for us:[13]

> A fundamental assumption of contemporary agencies involved in
> translating, producing, and promoting Scripture is that the printed Word
> is the ultimate objective. For diverse reasons, it has become necessary to
> reexamine this presupposition. This is even more urgent in places like
> Africa, where illiteracy is preponderant and the many efforts to increase
> literacy through the years have not been spectacularly successful. In
> some areas the annual population growth is higher than the annual
> increase in literacy. Moreover, even in the developed and hitherto 'highly
> literate' societies today, there is a shift from printed books to an audio-
> video orientation.

Viggo Søgaard notes this same shift toward decreasing literacy in Western culture

over 20 years ago. In *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel*, he cites

a Danish study that differentiated groups of literates in his own home culture where the

number of "book-based intellectuals" are being replaced by an "electronic picture

culture."[14] Western societies are becoming increasingly post-literate as people immerse

themselves in multi-media. As a result, they read less and thus decrease their capacity

to read well. At the time he wrote, one quarter of the world population was estimated

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[12] Missions has historically targeted developing countries, referred to as the 'majority world'. In mission language expatriate missionaries come from 'sending' countries and go to 'receiving' countries.
[13] Ansre, 65.
[14] Søgaard, 177.

to be "officially illiterate," and an estimated half was considered "functionally non-literate or non-readers."

Wayne Dye points out, in *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, that learning through literacy contrasts sharply with the experiential learning common in oral societies.[15] Social relationships, kinship, and conversation are highly valued, especially in rural parts of Africa. There is a high level of interdependence between people in these cultures, where fewer people see a need to learn to read. Nearly all the individuals in a family group can have their practical literacy needs met by a single literate member who reads for them. Jack Goody explains in "Alternative Paths to Knowledge in Oral and Literate Cultures" that this is one reason why literacy is neither encouraged nor habitual in these cultures.[16] For many people in developing nations, the effort required to learn to read is often higher than the benefits they perceive.[17] Within such a system, a majority of the people stands to gain very little economically from learning to read. According to Dye, this is not a difficulty since "face to face" societies can function satisfactorily with a 20-30% literacy rate.[18]

Jack Goody further describes the negative aspects of literacy on developing societies.[19] He states that it creates an increasing group of literates who leave the village and even the nation, because there is no place in the economic system or political infrastructure for a massive populace of literates. He saw this phenomenon firsthand in

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[15] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 227–32.
[16] Goody, 114.
[17] See discussion of Relevance Theory in the second section of 3.D.
[18] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 227–232.
[19] Goody, 164–6.

West African countries during the 1970s where graduates of Islamic schools, colonial

education, and Protestant mission left for opportunities elsewhere. In developing

nations, trades that were traditionally taught through oral apprenticeship were

relegated to a lower position in relation to jobs acquired through book-learning and

theoretical teaching. In his article, "Dependence on Literacy Strategy: Taking a Hard

Second Look," Herbert Klem postulates: "It is possible that the literacy-based approach

as applied in non-reading communities reaches best those who most want to escape

from their traditional culture into the modern world of wealth and technology, but it

may not be successful in reaching the majority of the people, or the poor in many

regions."[20]

Logistical challenges

Gilbert Ansre believes that, among those who can read, there is only a small fraction

who will actually read Scripture regularly. Although we can create literates through

training, we cannot make them become regular 'readers' of Scripture. In "The Crucial

Role of Oral-Scripture: Focus Africa," he outlines a series of five criteria for assessing

what percentage of the reading population may possibly engage with printed

Scripture.[21] Starting with the total percentage of literates, his five eliminatory

statements successively deselect a percentage of the literate population:

> 1. Not all people who claim they can read, actually can read (70%);
> 2. Not all who can read, actually do read (50%);
> 3. Not all who actually read, do read well (70%);

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[20] Herbert V. Klem, "Dependence on Literacy Strategy: Taking a Hard Second Look," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 12, no. 2 (June 1995): 61, accessed May 18, 2012, http://www.ijfm.org/ PDFs_IJFM/12_2_PDFs/01_Klem.pdf.
 [21] Ansre, 66. I have slightly modified the wording of his statements.

4. Not all who read well, do actually read Scripture (50%);
5. Not all who read the Scripture, do so regularly (70%).

Ansre reduces the starting literacy rate by multiplying the original amount by the optimistic percentages he proposes (*in parentheses above*). We can apply his calculations to Cameroon, by successively multiplying the average literacy rate of 74.5% by the factors in parentheses for each statement.[22] After performing all five calculations in order, we get an estimate of 6.4% of the population whom we can expect to read the Scriptures on a regular basis. This is not a promising situation for employing literacy as the primary means of Scripture Engagement if we want to impact a high percentage of the population.

Walter Ong, in his article "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," advises that literacy rates vary too much, even within the same group, to be of any use for designing Scripture Engagement strategies.[23] There are not enough constants to provide helpful comparisons. Søgaard adds that the definition of literacy and the survey instruments used to assess literacy levels continues to change between one testing and the next.[24] These three factors prevent us from making definitive literacy plans for our target audiences. Søgaard says that the level of literacy needed ultimately depends on the culture and the demands of the environment in which people find themselves.

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[22] *Adult and Youth Literacy—National, Regional and Global Trends, 1985-2015*, UIS Information Paper (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, June 2013), 52, accessed August 25, 2015, http://www.uis .unesco.org/Education/ Documents/literacy-statistics-trends-1985-2015.pdf. The average adult literacy rate is a projection for all persons age 15 and older.

[23] Walter J. Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," *Journal of Communication* 30, no. 1 (March 1980): 197–204.

[24] Søgaard, 18–26.

In the article, "Communicating Effectively to Non-Readers—How to Make Oral

Communication More Effective," Rick Brown adds to the discussion by highlighting an

important difficultly in achieving literacy. He says that "literacy programs require

massive investments of time, personnel, and funding to achieve just a 5% rate of

functional literacy, and they usually benefit only those who are able to take classes."[25]

Vincent Griffis, in his dissertation, *Vernacular Scripture Use in two Cameroonian*

language communities: Kom and Bafut, includes testimony from the literacy

coordinators in the Bafut, Kom, and Limbum language communities.[26] All of them

certified that literacy was not sustainable without outside funding.

Harriet Hill's research, in *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads—From Translation to*

Communication, reveals the vast difference in literacy rates between leaders and lay

people. In the region of West Africa where she worked, she observed that the literacy

rate among lay people was only 22%, while that for church leaders was as high as 81%.[27]

She says this range is characteristic of group-oriented cultures. Low overall literacy rates

are not problematic in this context, since individual Bible reading is not the norm. A

majority of the population is content to hear the Scriptures read to them or listen to

them in another audio format. For this reason, Harriet Hill believes non-literates can still

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[25] Rick Brown, "How to Make Oral Communication More Effective—Communicating Effectively to Non-Readers," International Journal of Frontier Missions 21, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 176.

[26] Vincent W. Griffis, "Vernacular Scripture Use in Two Cameroonian Language Communities: Kom and Bafut" (Dissertation, Boston University School of Education, 2011), 162.

[27] Harriet S. Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads: From Translation to Communication* (Manchester, UK; Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome Publications, 2006), 75.

benefit from written materials thanks to their literate leaders. Therefore, it may not be necessary to strive for a high level of literacy.

Bettina Gottschlich reports findings similar to Harriet Hill's in her dissertation, *Transformational Scripture Engagement among the Budu of Congo-Kinshasa*.[28] Church leaders are the ones who typically own a Bible or other Scripture resource. Budu people who read Scripture, do it communally in group settings or personally for sermon preparation only. Individuals who read for personal devotions by themselves are rare and do so irregularly. Respondents said their people do not value learning through literacy, where 97% of the population say that they prefer the oral presentation of knowledge and opt for group settings to give and listen to instruction.

In *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, Herbert Klem notes that people who are described as functionally literate are only able to read and comprehend the simplest of messages.[29] This level of literacy is inadequate to understand the Bible in most versions in any language, since the concepts and translations are more difficult on many levels than the majority of other books. This can explain Wayne Dye's discovery, in *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, that in all the groups he studied, very few people were regular readers.[30] Only leaders and a few others had sufficient literacy skills and motivation to read for themselves, while most people learn Scripture in church services.

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[28] Bettina Gottschlich, "Transformational Scripture Engagement among the Budu of Congo-Kinshasa" (Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013), 99, 104, 106, 109–10, 116–120.

[29] Klem, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, 3–5.

[30] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 104–5.

OneBook of Canada conducted a Scripture Engagement study, titled "Impact

Assessment Report--Results of an October 2012 study, surveying nearly 5,500 people in

Burkina Faso and Cameroon."[31] It investigated 20 Bible translation projects in these two

countries. Researchers attempted to identify the conditions that yield increased

engagement with Scripture and a positive impact on their respective communities. They

started with five hypotheses: two of which tested for effective media. Regrettably, both

of these only asked questions about literacy.[32] There was no mention of Scripture

Engagement, orality, or technology in the hypotheses. One would expect that such a

recent assessment on translation and transformation would include an analysis of

several facets of Scripture Engagement, especially orality and technology, and not

restrict the study to an evaluation of literacy alone. Only two brief pages, out of more

than 100, in this report mention orality and non-print Scripture formats.[33]

The report stated that more people purchase print media than audio-visual media.

This should not be surprising, given that literacy has been emphasized, and training

offered for it, from the beginning of the projects. Literacy products were promoted for

years, even decades, before audio and visual media were produced.[34] None of the

projects planned to produce audio and video media until the New Testament was

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[31] Martin Engeler, Béatrice Konfe-Tiendrebeogo, and Julious Ngum Kimbung, *Impact Assessment Report--Results of an October 2012 Study, Surveying Nearly 5,500 People in Burkina Faso and Cameroon* (OneBook, March 1, 2014), 1, 6–13, 49–55. OneBook is a Canadian organization funding Bible translation projects worldwide; ANTBA is Burkina Faso's national Bible translation association; CABTAL is Cameroon's national Bible translation association. The authors work these three organizations respectively.

[32] Two of the other hypotheses (out of five) were designed to test the impact of Scripture Engagement headed by nationals; the fifth one probed access issues that affect church growth.

[33] Engeler, et al, 52–5.

[34] Non-print media that were produced included radio programs, MP3 recordings, listening groups, and other unspecified media.

complete. OneBook's study fails to evaluate any of the variables which might affect this difference. This broad assessment reveals a continued focus on literacy over orality by some segments of Wycliffe-affiliated Bible translation agencies, despite the recognition that most of the areas where Bible translation is being done are predominantly oral. Moreover, this assessment does not meet the first of SIL's Ends for determining the most appropriate media for a language community. The report, however, does contribute one helpful finding to my thesis: that respondents with higher education use oral-aural media more.

Practical limitations and differences in lifestyle

In southeastern Cameroon, where Mary Beavon has worked for 30 years promoting Scripture, literacy has been difficult and unsustainable for the long-term. In a FOBAI article "Scripture Big Books—Promoting Scripture use in difficult environments" she shares some of the challenges she faced living in remote rural villages during those years. She learned over and over again that "…there is very little money for luxury items such as books."[35] In "Promoting SU in difficult environments" she explains how people never have disposable income for such things; and the local infrastructure is inadequate for the distribution of any marketable goods, including books.[36] Reading is not part of the cultural fabric; it is neither economical nor practical. No one is taught how to care

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[35] Mary Beavon, "Scripture Big Books--Promoting Scripture Use in Difficult Environments" (FOBAI, 2008), http://www.scripture-engagement.org/sites/default/files/Beavon%20M%202001%20Scripture%20Big%20Books.pdf.

[36] Mary Beavon, "Promoting SU in Difficult Environments," *Scripture in Use Today*, no. 2 (2001): 1.

for books— maintaining their physical integrity in an environment prone to damage from insects, animals, and humidity. As Søgaard said, "print is not for everyone."[37]

Jack Goody alerts us to some other deterrents to effective and practicable literacy, besides the hindrances described by the literature above. In "Alternative Paths to Knowledge in Oral and Literate Cultures,"[38] Goody informs us that printed literature often has a magical mystery about it for Africans, particularly as it concerns religious books, such as the Koran or the Bible. For many Africans, sacred books such as these are believed to have the power of a fetish, possessing inherent spiritual powers. I believe this attitude is another factor that can make the production of printed Scripture counter-practical. There are others who have equally negative motives, although theirs are non-spiritual. Many people in Cameroon have told us they want the Bible in the vernacular, solely for reasons of prestige, so they can boast to speakers of neighboring languages that they possess the Bible in their language. This desire and the social esteem of literacy are still insufficient motivators for people to read the Bible. If lives are to be transformed, then interest in the Word of God for its own sake must be stimulated. By finding alternative means for disseminating Scripture, misappropriation of the sacred text may be avoided.

Summary

The authors cited in this section explained both the benefits and the challenges of literacy. They have presented many factors working against a literacy approach to

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[37] Søgaard, 176.
[38] Goody, 126.

Scripture Engagement. Much of the literature demonstrates that literacy in developing

nations is difficult to implement. Scripture Engagement based almost exclusively on

literacy is inefficient and appears to be unsustainable in sub-Saharan Africa, without the

steady outside funding. Even in developed nations literacy is on the decline. We,

expatriate missionaries, must continually re-evaluate their own presuppositions in the

places where Bible translation organizations work. A variety of challenges exists due to

the differing cultural values and demographic conditions between the sending countries

and those of the people where these expatriates are allocated to serve. There is even

some disparity between the subculture of many missionaries and the majority of people

in their passport country.

Several authors claimed that the social structures in the majority world cannot

support a large population of literates who read regularly. Practicing literacy seems to

be on the decline on a global scale. Even in highly literate societies, a greater number of

people are reading less. Widespread literacy training can be costly, requiring huge

investments of money, time, and energy. Even after years of intensive literacy efforts,

the results are seldom proportional to the resources demanded. Therefore, in order to

sustain a functional literacy adequate to understand the complexities of the Bible,

literacy training must be extensive and ongoing for every learner. The literature reveals

that literacy training produces only a small minority of literates who are willing, able,

and eager to read regularly.

Therefore, a strong emphasis on a traditional, Western kind of literacy will not

produce the desired results. Literacy and print media do have their place in Scripture

Engagement. However, I believe that we need to present Scripture in a variety of formats, together with other forms of media, in order to make them more effective. Oral communication is one such category of other media. Again, this does not mean that orality is our second best option. It could be considered another kind of "literacy" in a system of multiple "literacies."[39] In the next section, we look at the literature on orality and the innovations that have been made in Scripture Engagement related to this mode of communication.

C.   LITERATURE ON SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT INNOVATIONS: ORALITY

In his book, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, Herbert Klem challenges us to look for alternative ways to reach "audiences [that] cannot be touched at all with written messages or will actually resist the content of any message presented in written form."[40] He insists that indigenous communication methods already exist, which can be harnessed to reach the segments of the community closed to print. He says that people in oral cultures are able to teach and learn many things orally: culture, religion, trades, and a host of other information—often without any need for writing.

Those working in Scripture Engagement activities over the years discovered that using literacy as the principal means of accessing Scripture was not successful for engaging oral societies. So, people began to experiment with other ways to present the Word of God. The first major breakthrough came with the idea of oral methods. An

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[39] Diana Masny and David R Cole, *Multiple Literacies Theory: A Deleuzian Perspective* (Rotterdam, the Netherlands; Boston, Mass.: Sense Publishers, 2009), vi–vii, 1-5, 10.
[40] Klem, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, 8.

increased awareness of the challenges associated with literacy and the success of orality

methods has led to a significant shift in philosophy and practice of Scripture

Engagement and literacy's role in it. Wayne Dye, Harriet Hill, Matt Welser, and Marcia

Welser, in particular, have each sought to give practical guidelines for addressing issues

surrounding low engagement with Scripture. They have called for the addition of other

methods and forms of presentation, such as orality-based formats and modifications to

our literacy and print media activities and expectations.

In his article, "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement—Social and Cultural

Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect," Wayne

Dye proposed eight conditions which must be satisfied in order to optimize the success

of Scripture Engagement in a given community.[41] He lists them as follows: (1)

appropriate language dialect and orthography; (2) appropriate translation style; (3)

accessible forms of scripture; (4) background knowledge of the hearer; (5) availability;

(6) spiritual hunger of community members; (7) freedom to commit to the Christian

faith; and (8) partnership between local church leaders, linguists, missionaries, and Bible

translators. In 1999, Matt and Marcia Welser came up with the "Welser scale," a simple

system of assessing each of these conditions ranging from one to ten on the degree to

which they have been met.[42] In their FOBAI article, "Assessing Scripture Use Conditions

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[41] T. Wayne Dye, "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement—Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 89–98.

[42] Marcia Welser, "Assessing Scripture Use Conditions with the Welser Scale" (FOBAI, 2009), 4, accessed September 2, 2015, http://www.scripture-engagement.org/sites/default/files/Welser%20M 202009%20Assessing%20SU%20Conditions%20with%20Welser%20Scale.pdf. I replaced "Scripture Use" (SU), which was used in the article, with the abbreviation "SE" for the sake of consistency in this paper. I

with the Welser Scale," they suggest that Scripture Engagement workers evaluate each of these conditions on a scale from 1 to 10. When the conditions are fully met, they assign that condition a 10, judging that it will be a strong asset to Scripture Engagement and they assign an 8 to conditions that are significantly met. They assign a 6 when some aspects are met, but will be a slight hindrance to SE; a 4 to conditions that are poorly met and will be a partial hindrance to SE. They assign a 2 when conditions are virtually unmet such that they will be a serious obstacle to SE; and a 0 to conditions that are completely unmet and will block Scripture Engagement.

Literature that Promotes Oral Media

Most of the authors I have cited employ the phrase "oral culture" to refer to societies, nations, or people groups where oral communication proliferates. In the literature, authors use this phrase to make a broad generalization about a given population, labeling the whole with traits possessed by part of the population. Using this label tends to imply that these are cultures without literates. This is inaccurate, since almost no place in the world is devoid of writing and reading, even though literates may be a minority. In their book *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority,* John H. Walton and Brent Sandy use the term 'hearing-dominant' to describe cultures where the majority of the population functions with a preference for oral communication.[43] I agree that 'hearing-dominant' is a more precise descriptor,

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would encourage the language teams working in our area to go through the Welser Scale before making their own Scripture Engagement plans in the future.

[43] John H. Walton and Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2013), Authors' online book commentary, accessed

since it underscores orality without excluding the literate members of a society. I suggest that we use this term for all of our discussions on orality. It might also diffuse some of the stronger reactions of literacy proponents.

In his article, "Dependence on Literacy Strategy: Taking a Hard Second Look," Herbert Klem declares that "after over 150 years of literacy based mission strategy, we will still miss half the world if we continue believing that people must read in order to receive the Word."[44] Accordingly, he recommends we completely replace literacy approaches with orality methods in contexts where oral communication predominates. In his book, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, Klem notes that the primary communication method that Jesus used was oral.[45] The culture of Palestine at the time of Jesus' lacked widespread literacy, even though it was rich with literature. Like Klem, Walter Ong, in his book *The Presence of the Word,* explains how Jesus delivered his message to favor a hearing-dominant society.[46] Jesus gave lessons in formats that were easier to remember. For example, Jesus taught using many parables—stories that are not easily forgotten. They can be easily retold to others without losing the main message and salient details. The Beatitudes are arranged with repetition of similar structures. In cultures where orality is more predominant than literacy, people have a larger capacity to memorize and recall what they hear. He points out how the

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September 3, 2015, http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=4032. Other authors use "group cultures," "face-to-face cultures," or "relationship-oriented."

[44] Klem, "Dependence on Literacy Strategy: Taking a Hard Second Look," 64.

[45] Klem, *The Bible as Oral Literature in Oral Societies*, 2. As far as we know, Jesus did not avail himself of the three written languages in existence in Palestine at that time: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

[46] Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 10, 17–30.

storytellers and orators in hearing-dominant cultures depend on mnemonic devices to remember, non-verbatim, the content of oral messages they tell and pass on to others.

Religion professor Richard A. Horsley is part of an emerging group of theologians exploring the oral performance of Scripture. In his book, *Text and Tradition in Performance and Writing*, he wrote that there is a re-emergence in Western academic circles for performing biblical texts and rediscovering its oral characteristics.[47] He claims it is undeniable that the Gospel was communicated through performance and recitation, in community contexts. Viewing Scripture from the perspective of its original performance setting highlights its dynamic nature. This simultaneously magnifies the tendency in biblical scholarship to interpret Scripture from the vantage point of print culture and literacy.[48] Horsley says that such a literature-based perspective obscures the aural characteristics of the biblical text.

Horsley dispels the notion that oral communication is unstable and inferior to print. In fact, he tells how other literature of the antiquities, such as Roman writings, were dictated orally and meant to be read aloud as oratories. From this evidence, he reasons that the biblical text is also the concretization of a huge repository of oral performance and oral communication. This can be demonstrated through the history of variations between biblical manuscripts in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. As such, he believes that multiple oral and written versions of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures circulated for

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[47] Richard A. Horsley, *Text and Tradition in Performance and Writing*, vol. 9, Biblical Performance Criticism (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2013), vii–xx.

[48] He accuses biblical scholars of anachronism in their interpretation of Scripture. He does, however, agree with them on their estimates of literacy in the ancient world of the scribes and rabbis: that the average literacy rate of the masses was only 2-3%.

generations before they took on the standard written forms we use today. Horsley's

view supports the argument that orality is an equally valid and reliable means of

communicating God's Word as printed texts are.

In his book, *Orality and Literacy—the Technologizing of the Word*, Walter Ong draws

attention to the fact that in much of Christian literary history, the oral has typically had

"primacy" over the written.[49] "God is thought of always as 'speaking' to human beings,

not as writing to them."[50] God always spoke to Jesus, and all of his teaching was oral: he

himself did not write anything. In *The Bible Translation Strategy* Wayne Dye testifies to

the power of oral proclamation when he declares, "the Scriptures nearly always do the

work of evangelism in conjunction with the oral witness of Christians."[51] In essence,

written texts serve to support spoken messages. Oral communication dominates the

lives of most people, in most places, in every period of history. Ong proclaims that

orality is more indispensable than writing, for the written word can only exist because

orality does.[52]

In a 1995 article, "The Crucial Role of Oral-Scripture: Focus Africa," Gilbert Ansre

announced: "Oral-Scripture in Africa is the highest potential medium of outreach for the

salvation message on the continent today and into the 21st century. It is capable of

reaching both the literate and the teeming millions of non-literate people."[53] he

observes that oral communication not only reaches illiterates, but modern literates who

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[49] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, vol. Reprinted (London & New York: Routledge, 1982), 74.

[50] Evangelicals might counter Ong's claim by referring to God's Word as his "love" letter to us.

[51] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 215.

[52] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, Reprinted, 3.

[53] Ansre, 68.

are too busy to read. Instead, they choose to listen to Scripture en route to their job or while they work. Oral electronic media also have the capacity to reach the younger generations who gravitate toward technological forms of communication. In this article, Ansre references several research projects that tested portions of New Testament recordings used in listening groups, sermons, and other venues in Ghana.[54] He noted that enthusiasm and interest in oral Scripture was extremely high. Ghanaian church leaders reported that it has improved their reading skills, while others were excited about learning unfamiliar NT passages.

Rick Brown writes, in "How to Make Oral Communication More Effective—Communicating Effectively to Non-readers," that oral media formats are more conducive to the social interaction that oral communicators desire.[55] He says that the relational aspect of "oral art forms…attracts listeners, improves communication, and helps people remember what they have learned."[56] Brown insists that audiences in hearing-dominant cultures absolutely must have orally-transmitted Scriptures, either in lieu of, or in combination with, print media, in order for the Word of God to be effective for mass communication. Otherwise, the majority of the population will not be able to access it. In addition, oral forms of Scripture tend to be more sustainable, because they are more economical for local people to produce and distribute; and they are compatible with their lifestyles.[57]

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[54] Ansre, 67.
[55] Brown, 176.
[56] Brown, 175.
[57] Brown, 177.

Literature on Oral Bible Stories

At a *Non-Print Media Consultation* in Nairobi in June 2000, Grant Lovejoy presented

a paper titled "Chronological Bible Storying: Description, Rationale and Implications." In

that article he relates how Chronological Bible Teaching was developed by New Tribes

Mission in the Philippines during the mid-1970s.[58] About a decade later, Southern

Baptist missionaries who also worked there adapted this approach, making it more

narrative in form to fit with oral communication styles. As a result, they created what

has become known as Chronological Bible Storytelling. In an online video "Share the

Story," Sam Poe explains how Bible Storying developed in Africa.[59] He relates the

experience of missionaries who had been evangelizing and planting churches among a

people group in West Africa for 25 years, coming to the conclusion that this group was

resistant to the gospel. Throughout those years, they conducted only 25 baptisms of

new believers. Some young converts, however, took the Bible stories they were learning

and began sharing them in the form of musical chants, just as their own heritage stories

were passed on. Within months the message spread like wildfire and a quarter million

new converts believed and were baptized. The content had not changed, only the

medium. Poe's account is one story that proves the effectiveness of oral communication

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[58] Grant Lovejoy, "Chronological Bible Storying: Description, Rationale and Implications" (presented at the Non-Print Media Consultation, Nairobi, Kenya, 2000), 3–4, accessed August 13, 2015, Chronological_Bible_Storying_-_A_Description.pdf.

[59] *Share the Story* (Portsmouth, NH: New Frontiers Church, n.d.), extracts, accessed August 14, 2015, www.biblicalstorying.com.

strategies for promoting Scripture Engagement. It also revealed the insights that

nationals have for creating culturally appropriate media.

Since the 1990s, J. O. Terry, of the International Mission Board, has been considered

an authority on biblical storying. He is best known for his book *Basic Bible Storying*,

which explains in depth how to craft chronological Bible stories.[60] He wrote prolifically

on the effectiveness of Oral Bible Storying in reaching peoples who show a preference

for oral learning or a resistance to literacy-based learning. In an article titled "Bible

Storying Handbook for Short-Term Church Mission Teams and Mission Volunteers," he

describes how communities in many parts of the world gain a better understanding

through listening than through reading.[61] He reveals that story-telling appeals to people

of all levels of literacy and education.

Terry's approach relies on the observation of oral learners in order to ascertain the

best technique for presenting Bible stories. Terry offers a word of caution: Bible stories

cannot be done quickly and carelessly, but must be crafted by translators who have a

deep understanding of the target language and culture. Bible storying spreads easily

through personal interaction, because it is more relational. As a result, God's Word is

kept "alive in their memory and retelling" in comparison to traditional preaching and

teaching, which were much less successful in evangelism and discipleship. Terry, thus

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[60] J. O. Terry, *Basic Bible Storying Preparing and Presenting Bible Stories for Evangelism, Discipleship, Training and Ministry* (Fort Worth, Texas: Church Starting Network, 2008), vii. The IMB is the sending arm of the Southern Baptist Convention mentioned earlier in this section. Terry is a participant in the International Orality Network, www.orality.net.

[61] J. O. Terry, *Bible Storying Handbook for Short-Term Church Mission Teams and Mission Volunteers*, revised. (Fort Worth, Texas: Church Starting Network, 2008), v–vi, accessed August 14, 2015, https://orality.imb.org/files/1/409/BibleStoryingHandb.pdf.

discovered a tool for transmitting God's Word that seemed to be a novel idea at the time, even though it has always existed. It has taken decades since then for Bible translation agencies to fully grasp its utility for communicating Scripture.

The *OneStory Partnership—A Story Worth Telling* expresses the desire of eight ministry partners to "penetrate oral communities through chronological Bible storying."[62] The site's "History" page states, "current estimates suggest that around two-thirds of the world's population processes new information by oral means." Some people who do read choose not to "use literate means to process more complex information such as is [contained] in the Bible. For these oral communicators, life lessons are processed by observation, participation and oral communication—stories, proverbs, genealogies, drama, song, chants, dance, ceremonies, rites of passage, oral histories and epics." They report that local 'storyers' and cross-cultural workers are finding responsiveness among groups previously resistant to the Word of God. Projects in a given language develop 40-60 stories in a two- to three-year period, which can be passed on for generations.[63] Since potential opponents may criticize the integrity of orally-drafted stories, audio recordings of the originals are made for reference. Volunteers can use these recordings to double the impact of the stories, by broadcasting them over radio, by CDs, and through other recording formats for listening groups.

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[62] "About OneStory: History," *OneStory*, accessed August 20, 2015, http://onestory.org/about /history. OneStory is a forum eight mission organizations involved in the Bible Translation movement. They believe that Scripture Engagement should start with oral story-telling long before investing in literacy activities.

[63] "About OneStory: Priorities," *OneStory*, accessed August 20, 2015, http://onestory.org/about /priorities.

Bettina Gottschlich, in her doctoral dissertation *Transformational Scripture Engagement among the Budu of Congo-Kinshasa*, offers us one of the most recent studies of Scripture Engagement—presenting a case study among the Budu of DRC.[64] She wanted to know what they consider ideal Scripture Resources (SR). She allowed them to consider all written, oral, audio, and audio-visual media, including any seminar or teaching event that involved regular Scripture use as valid SR. In the study, she asked Budu people what media they identify as Scripture Resources, what SR are available to them, and what hinders or motivates them to engage with those SR. A list of Scripture Resources like hers, encourages us to be more creative and resourceful in proposing new ideas. One of the most striking responses from Budu informants was their declaration that other Christians are their greatest Scripture Resources, especially those who live what they profess, church leaders above all.

After living resources, the most highly preferred media were audio and audio-visual. Within this genre, music was the most favored, followed by radio, the JESUS film, written devotional materials, and prayer. Not surprisingly, their responses reflect a bias toward oral communication as lived out through personal interaction and communal events. In fact, even the news that written materials are available is passed on through events and word-of-mouth, instead of through written communication. Her research unquestionably supports the new emphasis on orality over literacy.

Reflexively, we might easily regard orality as a panacea for low literacy. Richard Margetts gives us an astute caveat in response to those who are so inclined in his

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[64] Gottschlich, 7–8, 93–98, 125, 128–30.

doctoral dissertation, *From Scripture Access to Scripture Engagement—What facilitates and hinders Scripture Engagement in the Minyanka Churches of Mali?* He warns us against following a corrective so strongly that we let the pendulum swing in the opposite direction, such that we minimize literacy and exalt oral communication.[65] Oral forms alone may not be optimally useful for preparing a sermon, for instance. Audio recordings have other encumbrances related to the device used to play them, such as energy source issues, poor recording quality, navigating locations in the media itself.[66]

On the other hand, we cannot lean too heavily on literacy either. Instead, these two principal media types can reinforce each other in a Bible translation project. Oral methods must be used alongside literacy, both being adapted to the context, and utilizing the most effective technologies available.[67] In "Scripture in an Accessible Form--The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement," Wayne Dye says, "No matter how central oral teaching methods are in Scripture engagement, there is also a need for at least some people to be able to read."[68] Dan Fitzgerald, in his article, "Baka Bible Translation and Oral Biblical Narrative Performance," sums up the balance between literacy and orality with this succinct statement, "For what was once thought of as an 'either-or' missional approach – that is, a written versus an oral approach – may

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[65] Richard P. Margetts, "From Scripture Access to Scripture Engagement—What Facilitates and Hinders Scripture Engagement in the Minyanka Churches of Mali?" (Dissertation, All Nations, 2013), 17–22.

[66] We became aware of this after testing our Scripture products on the field.

[67] Literacy must be informed by adequate linguistic analysis to create an acceptable orthography. Scripture Engagement that is adapted to the context must be informed by good anthropological research.

[68] T. Wayne Dye, "Scripture in an Accessible Form--The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 124, accessed May 18, 2012, http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/26_3_PDFs/26_3Dye.pdf.

now be becoming a 'both-and' approach, much like that of the historical co-existence of the written and oral transmission of the gospel in the early church."[69] Each has its place, its pros and cons, as a communication channel in the domain of Scripture Engagement.

D. LITERATURE ON CONTEMPORARY SE: ORALITY PLUS LITERACY

Throughout this discussion, I have been referring to literacy and orality. By this, I do not intend to leave out visual presentations of Scripture. Literacy is more than reading print, it can be "reading" pictures and other images or objects, while orality is more than speech and hearing; it is drama, dance, and singing.

In his master's thesis "Scripture in an Oral Culture—The Yali of Irian Jaya," John D. Wilson advises that both literacy and orality each have their own limitations and advantages.[70] He says, however, that we should not view them as either mutually exclusive or inferior one to the other. They are simply different ways of transmitting information. Literacy and literature offer a means for storing and accessing information with more precision and durability. Literate people refer back to written sources in order to check for accuracy; otherwise, they must rely on rote memorization. Wilson explains that oral communicators transmit, store, and retrieve information in a less tangible way—relying on mnemonic devices such as repetition, rhythm, rhyme, and themes—to trigger the memory of important details, without memorizing verbatim.

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[69] Dan Fitzgerald, "Baka Bible Translation and Oral Biblical Narrative Performance," in *Bible in Mission*, ed. Pauline Hoggarth et al., vol. 18, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 150.

[70] John D. Wilson, "Scripture in an Oral Culture: The Yali of Irian Jaya" (Master's Thesis, adapted edition, University of Edinburgh, 1988), 16–24, http://www.papuaweb.org/dlib/s123/wilson/mth.pdf.

Sight and sound are factors which contribute to the improved retention of information. For oral cultures, orality is more than a means of communication—it involves the whole person in face-to-face interaction. Wilson suggests that literacy and orality together fill different gaps in communication as their inherent strengths work in complementarity.

In *Oral Communication of Scripture—Insights from African Oral Art*, Herbert Klem calls for Christian workers to utilize both oral (especially song) and written media together for the communication of the gospel, because there will always be "people who find reading difficult or unattractive."[71] He maintains that orality will continue to be a major aspect of learning in the cultures of West Africa into the foreseeable future.[72] Klem relates his experience of teaching an English course at a high school in Nigeria.[73] When he incorporated the telling of African folktales and personal stories in his lessons, the students who were struggling with the heavy emphasis on reading and writing improved. Some of the most disinterested students even excelled and thrived in this new environment. For this reason, he insists that we promote the Christian message "through traditional forms, …[which] would greatly improve the image of the Church as something good for Africa."[74]

Margaret Hill, a dynamic proponent of Scripture Engagement, wrote a recent article titled "Literacy can still hurt Scripture engagement…but there is good news too!" In it, she informs us that "increasingly here in Africa we are seeing that many language

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[71] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, xv.
[72] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, xiii–xv.
[73] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, 109.
[74] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, 137.

groups are very interested in using their languages orally, but very uninterested in reading or writing them."[75] She acknowledges that, in these language groups, the help of literate individuals is indispensable for producing oral Scripture from written versions. Margaret Hill has found that "in almost every case where a literacy programme is going nowhere, people will accept oral Scriptures and listen to them." She likens this scenario to seeing a movie before you read the book.[76] It runs counter to the recommended order of things, but it works better and challenges us to keep re-thinking our conventions. As a result of literature such as Margaret Hill's, we are starting to hear increased discussion on producing oral Scriptures before written Scriptures, as well as producing written Scripture through oral means.

In his dissertation, *Vernacular Scripture Use in two Cameroonian language communities: Kom and Bafut*, Vincent Griffis compared two language communities in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. Griffis's dissertation evaluates more media formats in more depth than the OneBook report, even though the latter covered significantly more languages over a much larger geographical area. Both the Kom and Bafut people groups have a published New Testament in the vernacular and a *Faith Comes By Hearing* (FCBH) program, where groups listen to an oral recording and then discuss the text. The Kom people have the additional benefit of the JESUS film.[77] For each language group, he

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[75] Margaret Hill, "Literacy Can Still Hurt Scripture Engagement…but There Is Good News Too!" (FOBAI, 2014), 2, accessed September 1, 2015, http://www.scripture-engagement.org/sites/default/files/Hill%20 M%202014%20Literacy% 20can%20still%20hurt%20Scripture%20Engagement.pdf.

[76] M. Hill, 3.

[77] The JESUS film was produced by Campus Crusade for Christ, who continue to oversee the dubbing of the script as it is translated into each new language.

found their level of Scripture Engagement to be relatively the same, despite differences in access and disparate mother-tongue literacy rates.[78] Both languages also had multiple exposures to hearing vernacular Scripture read aloud.

The Kom, who have a higher literacy rate in the mother-tongue, actually read the vernacular Scriptures less than the Bafut. Griffis attributes the higher reading rate among the Bafut to their greater proficiency in English and their higher value for education.[79] Once again, here is a study which reveals that it is the literate members of the population who listen more frequently to oral public reading of the Scriptures. Villagers confess they "see no need to learn to read their mother-tongue" since "they have lived most of their lives in an oral society" without written language.[80] Griffis counsels that oral recordings be made available to non-literates in order to expose them to Scripture. Furthermore, he recommends teaching non-literates to read, in order to increase their attentiveness and motivation for reading and for listening to oral presentations of the Scriptures. His research proves that both are necessary for promoting Scripture.[81] Harriet Hill would concur with his findings. In her book, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, she concludes that both oral and written media are most needed when Scripture is newly translated in a language and literacy is still low.[82] She researched Scripture use among the Adioukrou of Côte d'Ivoire in 2006, eight years after they received vernacular Scripture in print. People who initially heard the

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[78] Griffis, 128–32.
[79] Griffis, 161–3. Their proficiency covers speaking, reading, and writing.
[80] Griffis, 14.
[81] Griffis, 156.
[82] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 68–9, 71.

Scriptures orally increased their desire to read, improved literacy skills, and raised their

comprehension.

In his dissertation, *From Scripture Access to Scripture Engagement*, Richard Margetts

presents his survey of FCBH program participants among the Minyanka of Mali on their

preferences for reading and listening to Scripture.[83] He was surprised to discover that

54% of the respondents prefer both literacy and orality equally for engaging with

Scripture. Their preference for a combination of oral and literate methods is revealed in

their expectation for pastors to include stories, illustration, repetition, and participation

in preaching sermons. Only 18% prefer reading exclusively, while 28% prefer a strictly

oral exposure to the Minyanka Scriptures. Literacy skills are low: two-thirds do not read

well with confidence; and two-thirds of those who own a copy of the New Testament

admit they do not read it regularly. After participating in listening groups, non-readers

awakened their interest in being able to read the NT. Despite this increased desire to

read, respondents cited laziness as the greatest obstacle to reading the Scriptures. They

prefer to get explanations of difficult passages orally, from an authority figure, rather

than from books.

In *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, Harriet Hill gives the results from her testing of

oral and written comprehension using different kinds of text. She experimented with:

amplified text where footnote information is woven in, and simple text without extra-

textual information.[84] Three different groups of literates read each type of text and

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[83] Margetts, 37–39, 41–2, 50–1, 57. FCBH: *Faith Comes By Hearing*.
[84] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 68, 90.

three groups of non-literates listened to the respective text read to them. On comprehension tests of simple text, readers scored 50% better than listeners who heard an oral version. Conversely, listeners outperformed readers on the amplified texts. Overall, however, readers who access both media have a higher comprehension than strictly oral listeners, whether the text is simple or amplified. Although more than half of Harriet Hill's sample audience are able to read the mother tongue, all the respondents expressed strong interest in the oral Scriptures, which were then available on cassette.

Dan Fitzgerald, who worked with the Baka people of eastern Cameroon, observed that Christianity had almost no impact on Baka society, because earlier missionaries mistakenly relied on literacy as the primary means of giving them access to God's Word.[85] In an article titled "Baka Bible Translation and Oral Biblical Narrative Performance," he explains how the Baka language and culture is almost exclusively oral. Furthermore, he assures us that oral cultures do not easily become literate cultures. For them, life is already difficult; and the demands of literacy far outweigh the benefits that literacy offers. The first translation of Scripture by a Roman Catholic mission did not take orality into account and thus produced a very literal written version.[86] Fortunately, within a short time another Catholic mission translated Mark's Gospel in a more orally-structured style, which was more easily adapted to proclamation in song and public

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[85] Fitzgerald, 143–4. Historically, it has been outsiders, including Africans, who still refer to the Baka and others like them by the now derogatory term "pygmies." I use it here for the reader to easily identify this people group.
[86] Fitzgerald, 143-4.

responsorial liturgy. By 1994 an SIL project began using a similar method to produce a translation of the NT based on the natural discourse found in traditional Baka narratives.

Thanks to the ideas gleaned from Chronological Bible Storying, the translators felt they should produce oral translations of biblical narratives propagated through live performances.[87] Fitzgerald's colleague and team member, Yves Léonard, explains that Bible stories would be memorized by traditional storytellers and told in the indigenous style in the evenings around campfires.[88] In this way, Bible passages would be integrated into the culture and lifestyle of the people and become their own. Léonard hoped that, within a generation, the younger people would no longer distinguish the Scriptural narratives as foreign vis-à-vis their own traditional narratives. By this means, the next generation would be more open to reading the Scriptures, and hearing new Bible stories. Today, there is a growing MT literacy program among the Baka, some of whose interest in reading has been sparked by the previous oral stories.

One source in my literature review, however, counters the claims of the other literature which favors orality over literacy or a combination of the two. David M. Federwitz, of Lutheran Bible Translators, analyzed several aspects of Scripture use in 26 translation projects in Ghana, including promotion in different media formats.[89] In his article, "Local Ownership in a Language Development Program: Will it Lead to Sustainable Use of Scripture?", he was unable to prove a strong correlation between

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[87] Fitzgerald, 144–50.

[88] Yves Léonard, Personal communication, multiple conversations, September 2012. Léonard stipulated that a written translation would only be created for reference.

[89] David M. Federwitz, "Local Ownership in a Language Development Program: Will It Lead to Sustainable Use of Scripture?," *GIALens* 6, no. 1 (April 2012): 7.

literacy and ongoing Scripture Engagement in the majority of projects. His data also

showed no connection between the efforts invested in Scripture promotion and a

corresponding effect on Scripture use among the people. On the other hand, he found

that storying and audio-visual methods actually had a negative correlation.[90] In spite of

these findings, many project workers reported they were in favor of abandoning literacy

efforts, having been influenced by the orality trend. Most of them felt that listening

groups, Bible video showings, and songs would sustain Scripture use for a long time. This

case study appears to support literacy over orality, although the results for literacy are

not very definitive either.

Many sources show that we need a combination of literacy and orality approaches in

Scripture Engagement, whereas a number of authors seem to exalt orality. As a result of

the latter, some of those involved in Scripture Engagement may be tempted to abandon

literacy efforts altogether. Overall, the literature tends to support a combination of

orality and literacy strategies adapted to the circumstances of each Bible translation

project.

Literature on How Relevance Theory Can Influence Media Choice

I propose that recent developments in the field of communication studies,

specifically literature on Relevance Theory, can help us evaluate our choice of media for

a particular target audience. RT offers concepts of communication dynamics that can

guide our decisions to know which media will be most relevant to a group of people. In

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[90] Federwitz does not give a reason why his analysis showed a negative result; nor does he provide the reader with enough data or contextual information to find their own explanation.

this way, we can maximize our efforts, reduce failed attempts, and hone in on the

factors affecting the success or failure of different products.

In *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads—From Translation to Communication*, Harriet Hill

believes the reason many printed translations sit on a shelf is that they were not made

relevant.[91] According to her, too many translators start with the idea of producing a

printed product and then try to stimulate interest in that pre-chosen media format,

instead of working in the opposite direction. She insists that translators design the

product in which the population is interested, and then translate with the desired

product in mind. In *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel*, Søgaard

reminds us to keep the audience at the center of our plans for communicating

Scripture.[92] They have priority in determining what way the gospel should be delivered

to them. We must discover where they are, what their needs are, and how we can meet

them in relevant ways.

Harriet Hill recounts a couple of instances where the people did not respond to

translated Scriptures until they were made relevant. She suggests the following two

ways to make them relevant: (a) telling stories about creation and the beginning of

history, around a campfire; and (b) creating oral and written media of local stories and

Bible stories.[93] Hill found that many audiences that were new to vernacular Scripture, or

new to Scripture altogether, prefer oral and audio media formats even if they can read

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[91] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 1.

[92] Søgaard, 97–99.

[93] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 186. Here, Hill cites Annette Suzanne Harris (1997) and David M. Federwitz (2003).

the language.[94] If they can get the information by a means which demands less effort, they will choose the path of least resistance. That is why people must be shown how reading Scripture can be more profitable for them than listening alone.

Literature on Non-Print Media & Technology in Contemporary SE

Art, drama, and music

In "Scripture in an Accessible Form--The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement," Wayne Dye describes how a group of Cameroonians were exposed to gospel stories accompanied by drawings from a Cameroonian artist and the same stories told using Western visuals.[95] He found that people interacted more with gospel stories accompanied by local artwork than they did with those containing 'foreign' illustrations. Dye's case study underscores the need for other forms of media that add a visual dimension, as well as the importance of using appropriate local media.

Harriet Hill, in *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads—From Translation to Communication*, proposed that drama be used early on in Scripture Engagement activities. It is a medium that can create immediate interest in Bible stories, and eventually stimulate people's desire to read Scripture for themselves.[96] Dye in his article, "Scripture in an Accessible Form--The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement," shares an account of how local drama was used among Australian Aborigines of Echo Island to

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[94] Harriet S. Hill et al., *Bible Translation Basics: Communicating Scripture in a Relevant Way*, ed. Rhonda Hartell Jones (Dallas: SIL International, 2011), 129.
[95] Dye, "Scripture in an Accessible Form," 126.
[96] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 83–4.

convince them that God cares for them.[97] As a result, people passed the message on so that it spread quickly throughout the Outback.

Herbert Klem, in *Oral Communication of Scripture—Insights from African Oral Art*, states that Scripture set to music benefits both literates and illiterates.[98] In Nigeria, he helped Yoruba speakers to create a paraphrastic translation of highly relevant portions of Hebrews, and set them to traditional Yoruba music. Then, he tested their knowledge of the content and found that participants retained much more information from the musical translation than they did from printed text. Several bystanders corroborated these results: both a choir and a pastor, who were passively listening during the testing, learned more verses in a shorter period of time than any previous efforts they had made to memorize Scripture. A carpenter working nearby also overheard and was later heard singing the Scripture songs without realizing it himself.

In *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact,* Wayne Dye affirms that music, dance, drama, chants, and poetry can be valid and incredibly effective media for communicating God's Word, provided they can be disconnected from pagan and erotic associations.[99] When indigenous music is used, it can give credibility to and create significant interest in Scripture. Dye found that music almost always enhances the vitality of the Scriptures in the studies he reviewed in Mexico and the Philippines.[100] In many parts of Mexico, Christians became known as the singers,

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[97] Dye, "Scripture in an Accessible Form," 127.
[98] Klem, *Oral Communication of the Scripture*, 145–6, 167–78. His study was based in the Igbayo, Okeya, and Ajase villages.
[99] Dye, "Scripture in an Accessible Form," 125.
[100] Dye, *The Bible Translation Strategy: An Analysis of Its Spiritual Impact*, 112–3.

because they sang American hymns in Spanish or the vernacular wherever they went. As music listening shifted in the cantinas to Mexican styles with guitar accompaniment, the listening taste of Christians moved with it so that Christian songs became even more indigenous in flavor. In the Philippines, believers were excited as new songs were being written to accompany the other Scripture media they had. Non-readers, in particular began finding answers to their daily problems in the music. Dye concluded that Scripture put to music increases people's response to the gospel and their interest in reading the Word of God.

John D. Wilson relates how oral Scripture was indispensable for the Yali people of Irian Jaya, in "Scripture in an Oral Culture—The Yali of Irian Jaya."[101] Project members produced a dynamic narrative recording to accompany the published text of Acts. They recorded another text called "Good News," which was played from cassette tapes and accompanied by a large picture book, whose illustrations visually communicated parts of what was heard. Both of these tools were well-received and effective for transmitting the NT message. Wilson, however, urges that future media depend less on technology than these two platforms did, and more on indigenous media such as hymnody.[102] Hymns provide an interactive way to teach Scripture to all Yali involving audience participation. By producing hymns, the Yali have found an activity that fits well with nightly story-telling in their dark huts—a context in which trying to read or view print materials is futile. This traditional setting happens to be the ideal venue for teaching

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[101] Wilson, "Scripture in an Oral Culture," 47–48.
[102] Wilson, "Scripture in an Oral Culture," 58–60, 62–3.

beliefs and disseminating practical information in their society. Locally created Scripture songs have wide appeal because they follow the cultural style of singing, poetry, and performance. They also communicate the Gospel to people for whom the written Word of God would otherwise remain closed.

Viggo Søgaard lists many advantages of using audio and video media, such as television, film, and radio, in his book, *Media in Church and Mission: Communicating the Gospel*.[103] He holds that these non-print media have the potential to reach a large audience composed of literates and non-literates who can interact with each other on what they have seen and heard. Video recordings allow viewers to watch them at their leisure and offer unlimited repetition. Søgaard claims that video has the power to heighten the authority of the Word when presented in tandem with printed Scripture materials. Similarly, he encourages the use of radio, because one can listen to it while doing other activities. Despite its lack of visual stimuli, it is immediate in real-time, personalized, believable, cost-effective, and variable, since radio programs can present sound and speech in a variety of formats. He says that audio Scripture can be more effective if a live facilitator can give personal directions and add information missing from the recording.

Technological Media: Radio, Audio, Video, Phones, and Digital Media

In her article "Are vernacular Scriptures being used?—Kabiye research results," Harriet Hill shares her findings on the people's interaction with different Scripture

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[103] Søgaard, 114–6, 131–4, 151–5, 191–3.

media.[104] She found that people in towns were more apt to listen to FCBH audio

recordings of the Kabiye New Testament and watch the JESUS film more than those in

rural areas. She also discovered that twice as many people prefer listening to the audio

recording on the radio than they do hearing it on cassette in a listening group. In fact, it

was so appealing that the radio announcer was compelled to add another hour of play

at a later time to accommodate complaints from those who missed the first broadcast

while they were working in the field. Ever since that time, if he does not play the

Scriptures continuously, people call in to complain as soon as the radio program stops.

In a FOBAI article, "A Typical Local Language Seminar for Pastors," Chris Jackson

provided evidence that promoting Scripture by using songs and film increases memory

retention.[105] Students in a religion class improved their test scores on Luke's Gospel

from 50% to 90% just by viewing the JESUS film as part of the curriculum. Pastors who

prepared their sermons using both English and Ejagham Bibles learned more. Preaching

in Ejagham kept people from falling asleep, sparked emotional responses, and increased

demands to know more.

Scripture Engagement specialist Andreas Ernst wrote a technical manual for using

oral media in northern Cameroon, *Créer des Messages Audio-Visuels en Langue

maternelle—Livre d'Apprentissage et de Référence*.[106] In it, he concedes that audio and

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[104] Harriet S. Hill, "Are Vernacular Scriptures Being used?—Kabiye Research Results," *The Bible Translator* 63, no. 2 (April 2012): 69–70, accessed September 8, 2015, http://www.ubs-translations.org/fileadmin/publications/tbt/practical/ BT-63-2-2012-Hill.pdf. The Kabiye are located in Togo.

[105] Chris Jackson, "A Typical Local Language Seminar for Pastors: A Report of a Seminar for Ejagham Pastors from Cameroon and Nigeria" (FOBAI, 2009), accessed November 13, 2015, http://scripture-engagement.org/sites/default/files/Jackson%20C%202003%20Ejagham%20Pastors%20Seminar.pdf.

[106] Andreas Ernst, *Créer des Messages Audio-Visuels en Langue maternelle—Livre d'apprentissage et de référence* (Maroua, Cameroon: SIL Cameroon, 2013), 8–12, 19.

video Scripture products alone are insufficient to create the desired impact of transformed lives. He adds further that no single technology can serve as the sole media for promoting the Scriptures, no matter how good it is. He lists three indispensable elements in any Scripture Engagement program. Whatever format is used, it will not be successful unless it is accompanied by: (a) personal interaction, (b) Christian witness, and (c) other forms of communication. Personal interaction implies the necessity for discussion, with reflection, of the message's content in order to make the information exchange more dynamic. Christian witness to their audiences is two-fold—presenters must live the life they profess and practically apply what they learn to their daily living. Other forms of communication are essential for reaching the whole person. Each person has a different combination of tastes and learning styles, which require a variety of inputs—reading aloud, talking, visiting, hospitality, Bible study, practical aids, preaching, interviews, debates, drama, documentaries, comedies, song, dance, music and so on. He found that young people prefer to learn something new through music, an account, or a drama (e.g., soap-opera). Ernst says that it is important to know one's audience and what subject matter lends well to each media format.

Ernst found that the distribution formats most appealing to young people are SD memory cards they can use on their phones, or DVDs they can use in a computer.[107] Wayne Dye adds, in "Scripture in an Accessible Form--The Most Common Avenue to Increased Scripture Engagement," that oral storying, visual arts, and performing arts can

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[107] Andreas Ernst, *Créer de Messages Audio-Visuels En Langue maternelle,* 35.

typically be done in real-time, while some can also be transferred to digital media.[108]

The electronic media itself, which includes all audio, video, phones, and other electronic

devices can satisfy up to five of the eight conditions he proposes for successful Scripture

Engagement: bestowing prestige on the language, presenting it in an appropriate

format, improving accessibility and availability, stirring up spiritual interest, and

providing better background information.[109]

In Gottschlich's dissertation, *Transformational Scripture Engagement among the

Budu of Congo-Kinshasa*, she gives further testimony of the need for multi-media

presentations of Scripture. For Scripture impact in her context, she recommended

adding the arts, physical symbols, and phones, because non-leaders "mostly hear

Scripture through preaching, music, radio, or cassettes."[110] In a FOBAI article, "Between

Friends: Passing the Scriptures from Phone to Phone—Some Implications of Mobile

Phone Technology for Scripture Distribution," Richard Margetts explains how easily

Scripture audio and video can be spread from phone to phone via Bluetooth, infrared,

wireless transfer, or MMS without any cost to the users.[111] Phones can also receive

media through the internet, in emails from computer or phone, and from computer via

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[108] Dye, "Scripture in an Accessible Form," 125–7.

[109] Dye, "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement—Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect," 89–98. See section 3.C for more details on the eight conditions.

[110] Gottschlich," 102, 146.

[111] Richard P. Margetts, "Between Friends: Passing the Scriptures from Phone to phone—Some Implications of Mobile Phone Technology for Scripture Distribution" (Richard P. Margetts, 2010), 1–4, accessed May 15, 2012, http://www.scripture-engagement.org/sites/default/files/Margetts%20R% 202010%20Between%20Friends%20%20passing%20Scripture%20from%20phone%20to%20phone.pdf.

USB, making it one of the most effective means of distributing Scripture widely and cheaply.

Summary

In recognition of multiple "literacies", those who work in this domain no longer speak of literacy and orality as a dichotomy of two opposing approaches.[112] The matter is more complex than literacy verses orality. Aspects of both run along a continuum of "literacies," such as the literacy required to decode an orthography versus the "literacy" needed to decipher pictures, drawings, and other symbols unique to each culture and language. Technology can be a great asset to Scripture Engagement: by creating interest in Scripture, giving credibility to the importance of God's Word; and speeding up the dissemination Bible truths. This technology can be used for literacy materials, oral presentations, and audio-visual media. As we have seen, the ideal media are a combination of these formats tailored to the environment, needs, preferences, and lifestyle of the people receiving them; and they must be community-owned.

In the history of mission work, Scripture Engagement has witnessed many changes over the last few decades, experiencing a rapid evolution of its philosophy, strategy, and practice in modern missiology. We are seeing a dramatic re-evaluation of our print bias in an attempt to improve the impact of Scripture. By promoting newly developing technologies, re-discovering age-old non-print resources, and combining these methods, we can better reach our goal of transformed lives. In the next chapter I will describe the

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[112] Masny and Cole, vi–vii, 1-5, 10.

methodology I used in my study to assess the appeal of several media formats at this

stage of Scripture Engagement in the Kwasio translation project.

CHAPTER 4: THESIS-PROJECT DESIGN & PROCESS

A. THESIS-PROJECT SETTING, PLANNING, PREPARATION, & EXECUTION

The purpose of this thesis-project was to explore several facets of Scripture

Engagement in the Kwasio translation project in south coastal Cameroon. In Chapter 1, I

explained that this study seeks to identify suitable media formats for newly translated

Kwasio Scripture. Secondly, my research assesses the appeal of these Scriptures among

the population.

The Subjects, The Purpose, & the Time-Frame

In 2004, my wife and I began considering how we could partner with the Kwasio

language community.[1] We hoped to stimulate interest for Bible translation throughout

the Kwasio community, by mobilizing churches and local leadership to take ownership

of their own translation project. We would serve as mentors and resource consultants in

literacy, translation, and Scripture Engagement. Over the course of eight years our

involvement in the Kwasio translation project included linguistic analysis, community

mobilization, and training local people.

Late in 2011, the project began receiving outside funding for translation, literacy,

and community mobilization. Then during 2012, the Kwasio community formed a

committee of church and civic leaders to oversee language development and Bible

translation. After the committee was formed, we finalized the Kwasio orthography.

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[1] SIL Cameroon assigned my wife and I to the Coastal Bantu Cluster of languages, which includes the Kwasio, Iyasa, Batanga, and Gyele people groups.

Subsequently, three trained Kwasio translators began translating nine parables from Luke's Gospel. Shortly thereafter, we developed a literacy manual, continued linguistic analysis, and reinitiated community mobilization. I put my research plan into action as soon as the parables had been translated. The conception and research phases of my thesis-project were carried out between mid-2012 and mid-2015—entailing preparation of the materials, their distribution, development of the survey instruments, and data collection. Nearly all of the work on translation, production, project design and its implementation were done from Yaoundé and Kribi, Cameroon.

Contextual Variables & the Cultural Milieu

Before planning any Scripture Engagement strategies, it was important to consider the physical and cultural environment of the area before implementing any SE activities. Knowing the context would help me interpret the findings and point me to adjustments needing to be made in later research. Thanks to more than ten years living and working in the area, I had made many observations. The geographic surroundings where the Kwasio live is predominantly rural, in a region of dense tropical rainforest, with a coastal plain rising to a mountainous interior.

Kribi, Lolodorf, Campo, and Bipindi, are the four principal towns where electricity is sporadic in all locations. However, none of these municipalities provide running water. The road system is not well developed: Lolodorf has a two-lane paved road going to it and a few miles of paved road within. Kribi's main road is paved, with a dozen miles of additional paved road in the city. Very few in the rural population own a car or motorcycle. Those without a vehicle rely on motorcycle taxis for traveling around town.

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Otherwise, they depend on small private transport buses between towns and cities. The

people living in Kribi and Lolodorf can travel easily to the port city of Douala or the

capital city of Yaoundé. However, travel between their own towns and villages in the

language area is much more difficult, costing disproportionately more time and money

for those shorter distances.[2] This makes distribution of materials and personnel within

the language community a major challenge.

Economically, most people depend on subsistence farming and fishing, or the help of

wealthier relatives, for daily sustenance. Thus, the majority of people struggle to meet

the demands of each day. Despite their meager incomes, many homes have televisions

and small stereos; and one hears of the importance people put on children's education,

clothing, building a house, buying a vehicle, or owning a cell phone. Yet, only a small

percentage of people are willing or able to spend money on other luxury items, such as

electronic devices and books.

Owing to the legacy of missionary schools, a relatively high proportion of Kwasio

have received a better education than people in other areas of Cameroon, despite their

rural setting. This has enabled some to acquire well-paid jobs, which means there are

Kwasio people with income high enough to afford Scripture materials whatever they

cost. However, education in the national language (French) can have negative effects on

use of the mother tongue. It is common knowledge that government statistics report an

increased literacy rate in French. Adults fear that each successive generation speaks

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[2] For instance, it takes longer to drive the 75-mile inland road from Kribi to Lolodorf than it does to take the 190-mile paved road that joins these towns to the cities.[2] In fact, the dirt road can take at least 6 hours in a personal vehicle or 12 hours in a hired transport vehicle.

more French and less Kwasio. A high literacy rate in French, coupled with the rarity of

book ownership, could adversely affect the success of literacy-based Scripture

Engagement in the vernacular. Despite their apparent general disinterest for owning

books in French, many Kwasio long to possess printed Scripture in their mother tongue.[3]

On the other hand, as the literature in Chapter 3 explained: people with greater

education engage more with Scripture, whether the media is print-based, orality-based,

or electronic.[4] As such, an overall increase in education could contribute to higher levels

of engagement with Scripture.

A large part of the population considers themselves Christians. Among the people

interviewed for this thesis-project, 64% claim that they attend church regularly.[5] Many

Evangelicals and Pentecostals want to have the Scriptures in Kwasio for preaching and

devotional use. There are also members from the mainline denominations, both

Protestant and Catholic, who want to own a Kwasio Bible for various reasons. Many

members of the mainline church, EPA, still express a strong desire to have the Bible in

Kwasio.[6] This is the denomination which first asked missionaries in the 1920s for a Bible

translation in Kwasio.[7] During the 30 years prior to that, their church services were

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[3] This does not imply that they want to read it.

[4] See Griffis and H. Hill in Chapter 3, Section D.

[5] A total of 67, out of 104, respondents interviewed claimed to attend church 2-3 times per month, every Sunday, or more than once per week.

[6] The Église Protestante Africaine (EPA), or the African Protestant Church, was formerly known as the Kwasio Protestant Church. The name protestant is apt, because they broke off from the Presbyterian mission church, which had refused to use their mother tongue. EPA beliefs and practices incorporate many cultural elements of Kwasio traditional religious rites and ceremonies.

[7] In 1881 Protestant and Catholic missionaries arrived at the coast around Kribi. American Presbyterian missionary Dr. A. C. Good established churches, a seminary, and mission schools using Bulu as the language of choice (largely unknown to the Kwasio) for evangelism, worship, discipleship, and education. In 1910, a German priest, Father Skolaster, designed an alphabet for Kwasio. In the 1930s,

conducted entirely in Bulu. As a result, a large number of people left the Presbyterian

Church to form their own denomination in 1934, making Kwasio the exclusive language

for church services: for preaching, teaching, singing, praying, and announcements.

Throughout the years, individuals sought to translate various portions of Scripture, with

only limited success.[8] No one tried to collaborate with others to translate the Bible into

Kwasio. Yet, their desire for it has not dissipated.

Some Kwasio want access to the Word of God to build their faith, as well as to pass

on their faith to their children. Still, there are others who want Kwasio Scriptures for the

prestige it gives their language. Many parents want their children to learn Kwasio well,

because they are proud of their mother tongue. They believe the written Word of God

will provide a way for them to ensure the survival of their language by guarding the

vocabulary, grammar, and expressions in Kwasio, while simultaneously learning to read

and write it. Of course, there are some people who have no interest in having the

Scriptures at all, but are very much interested in developing and promoting the

vernacular in the form of other literature.

Our ability to capitalize on technology for Scripture Engagement in the Coastal Bantu

languages does have some potential, but also many limitations depending on the type

of device. Technology is readily available, although relatively expensive. Only a very

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Kwasio pastor Ngally used that alphabet to design a working orthography. He then developed the "Kwasio School": literacy training for his people. From 1945-1950 there were Kwasio schools in every village using not only primers, but Gospels, hymns, and other literature.

[8] In 1969, Pastor Jacques Ngally translated the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles by himself and published them in one volume through the Cameroon Bible Society (*Alliance Biblique du Cameroun*). Some 25 years later, Father Nicodème Bouh worked alone for ten years translating the entire Bible plus Apocrypha. He has bequeathed his handwritten draft in dozens of notebooks to SIL. The Kwasio translation team is using both sets of documents as their sources alongside French versions of the Bible.

small percentage of people own a DVD player or computer; but more people own TVs, and even more have radios. Cell phone ownership is perhaps the highest of any device and steadily increasing. Cell phones, radios, and MP3 players are less expensive and not dependent on a continuous power supply. There are radio broadcasting stations in three locations (Lolodorf, Kribi, and Campo), whose signals can transmit to most locations in the language area. Live radio programs offer a personal touch, which resonates with people's desire for social interaction. Similarly, people are motivated to own cell phones, because communication and maintaining relationships are strong values. For these reasons, radios and cell phones may be the best electronic devices for supporting non-print media. Print media is the next most economical and usable format.[9] Paper, printing machines, and printing services are readily available and affordable for everyone. Print can last if people protect it, can be easily passed on, and does not require a power source. People can quickly navigate through printed materials; and notes can be written on them.

As we read in Chapter 3, oral communication in the form of drama, singing, and storytelling has the greatest versatility, because these types rely primarily on people resources to transmit the message. They may only require time and energy, if the performers (actors, singers, or orators) are on site. Such forms of oral media cost nothing in terms of money or materials. If oral Scripture can be learned by enough people in numerous locations, transportation expenses could be minimized.

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[9] There is evidence of two hindrances to using print media: the difficulties of adequate light sources and being able to acquire glasses, whether prescription or reading.

Alternatively, oral presentations could be converted from live performance to digital

media. The drawbacks of electronic media are: the cost of production and the

technological issues it introduces. The advantage of producing and distributing this kind

of media is that expenses can be kept lower than the expense of transporting live

performers from one location to another.

The Materials & Their Content

The Kwasio translation team initially translated nine of Jesus' parables in Luke's

Gospel. I had planned to produce all nine in each format, but realized that would delay

the start time of the research by many months. Therefore, I limited the content to one

parable, in order to eliminate all the formatting that would have required. In the end,

we chose the parable of "The Prodigal Son" and produced it in three print formats and a

single audio-video version in three electronic formats. This gave us six different

products: a bi-fold leaflet (4-page), a 14-page coloring book, a 6-foot banner, and an

audio-video-text slide show, which can be viewed on computer, DVD player with TV, or

cellular phones. I expected each one of these products, in the order listed above, to

have progressively more appeal (than the former).

Having a somewhat broad sampling of media formats has the capacity to reach

people with different learning styles and reinforce what people remember. I originally

considered including the following media formats using the same portion of Scripture:

(a) a super-sized book read aloud to an audience, (b) a text-only format for cell-phone,

and (c) a video dramatization. I opted against these, because they would have taken

more time, training, and funding than were feasible within the bounds of our translation

project activities. I believe the best Scripture media would fulfill these criteria: be

affordable, simple to produce, fairly easy to distribute, and that people be aware that

they are available. The media types we decided to test were easier to produce and could

be distributed within a single venue.

All of the media formats draw from a collection of fourteen illustrations done by a

Cameroonian artist, conceived specifically for this parable. A document template

already existed for an A6 booklet, which I converted to an A5 bi-fold leaflet.[10] The leaflet

uses eight of the drawings with the full text of the parable. For the 6-foot plasticized

banner, all 14 illustrations are used with the text and enlarged to fit its length. The text

is in black ink and the illustrations in blue on a white background, and can be mounted

on the wall in a church, for example. We further enlarged the illustrations to create a

coloring book, in which the source text was condensed to one sentence per image,

providing an abridged description of the story sufficient to give the storyline. Surveyors

would sell the coloring book with a small set of colored pencils as one unit.[11]

The audio-video media was created from another template that contained all the

illustrations in color, with the text, and a recording of the text being read aloud. All

three elements are synchronized as they appear on the screen and the oral recording is

heard. The images have movement, simulating the effect of a camera panning over and

zooming in and out of each scene. This single media type was produced in three

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[10] An A5 leaflet is made by folding a piece of A4 paper in half. It is printed on both sides.
[11] See Chapter 5 on how selling the coloring book and pencils together, as a unit, affected sales.

different digital formats: DVDs, CDs, and SD cards, playable on a variety of devices such as computer, mobile phone, media players, or a television with player.

The Hypotheses & My Approach

The goal of this thesis-project was to identify appropriate Scripture media for the Kwasio people as early as possible in the translation project, in order to have the greatest impact. My guiding question was twofold: Which Scripture media formats have the most immediate appeal and which ones might sustain the highest interest into the near future? The reception of the Scripture products would be assessed on the basis of which products people preferred as reflected in their purchases and their comments. I hoped to discover what would be the best media to produce for the next few years, as each book of Scripture is translated. Secondarily, I wanted to determine the accessibility of the Scripture media in the Kwasio area. It would also be helpful to know which devices are more suitable for presenting electronic media. I asked myself what kinds of media or activities might reach specific segments of society. I hope to go beyond all these questions to predict cultural changes and keep in step with technological trends.

The research looks primarily at two criteria to assess the level of appeal—the number of products sold in each format and what media they preferred. I was also interested in whether or not people would still be using the media at the time of the follow-up interview. My research focused on initial reactions from people exposed to the new print and audio-video formats of Scripture. Unlike other Scripture Engagement research, it does not investigate the long-term impact of the Scriptures being studied

and applied over a prolonged period of time. Nor does it take into account the small amount of Scripture available at the time.

In the process of identifying pertinent media, I take for granted that God wants people to have access to his Word, to understand it, and to apply it to their daily lives, thus addressing the practical issues and questions they have. I assume that Scripture in the vernacular will be more effective for Scripture Engagement than Scripture in French, English, or any neighboring language. I believe that oral media will have a deeper impact and stimulate Scripture Engagement more broadly than literacy alone. I suggest that vernacular Scripture in printed form should *not* be the primary product for engaging our language groups with the Scriptures.[12] I posit that a combination of literacy and oral forms of communication are the best-suited media for engaging people with the Word of God in this part of Cameroon.

In the Kwasio Bible translation project, we have been placing our first and greatest efforts into a written translation accompanied by literacy training, in line with the philosophy of traditional language projects. Among the neighboring Iyasa language group, on the other hand, our initial activities have been in oral storying, following recommendations specific to their circumstances and the new focus in Scripture Engagement. One of my goals in this thesis-project has been to show the relatively lower effectiveness of print literacy compared to oral methods for communicating the

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[12] I do not believe print should be the first, or the primary, product for any new translation in an African language.

Scriptures among the Kwasio. I will critically compare the benefits and limitations of each media type for the Kwasio at this point in their translation project.

Assumptions & Expectations

There were two a priori presuppositions in this research: their preference for oral communication and their penchant for technology. Firstly, I have observed that very few Kwasio own or read books. We generally acknowledge that African culture is hearing-dominant. Across Central and West Africa, hymns and contemporary Christian music and lyrics spread across the continent in English and French through oral-aural channels by means of repetition. Oral communication can be easily and quickly transferred as needed compared to the time and resources needed for print and digital media.

Secondly, I have seen a dramatic rise in the availability and affordability of electronic devices of all kinds, and the value Cameroonians place on owning electronic devices over books. Therefore, we should take advantage of their desire for the latest technology, rather than try to replace it with an interest for books. Some technologies can disseminate audio-video media more quickly and cheaply than print. Usually, more people can access it at once; and technology can accentuate the nature of God's message as being always current.

I expected the Kwasio respondents to show a stronger preference for the audio-video media, and that they would gravitate toward the SD cards they could use in their phones. I had a profound desire to see Scripture media on SD card propagated through *viral marketing*, as people passed them on freely. It would no longer cost anything once the first copies were distributed; and no more energy would need to be expended by

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project personnel to distribute them.[13] Among the three print media, we anticipated the coloring book to be most popular.

B.METHODOLOGY

Guiding Principles

It is believed that people's lives will be transformed through the power of God's Word in their heart language, when Scripture is presented to them in a meaningful and appropriate way. Ultimately, real transformation depends on God working through the Holy Spirit regardless of the Scripture media used in the process. This belief is expressed in general terms, for all language groups in Cameroon, in SIL's foundational statements. The Core Purpose and Values read:[14]

> We believe that the core purpose for SIL Cameroon is to bring glory to God through fostering **mother tongue scriptures in use**. This purpose incorporates our historical values of linguistic and anthropological research, Bible translation, and literacy so that all people may have the life-transforming Word of God in a language that speaks to their heart. We will encourage churches and individuals to use mother tongue scriptures for the proclamation of the gospel, worship, personal spiritual growth and discipleship.

The bolded text highlights the importance of Scripture Engagement over all our objectives. The means for how Scripture Engagement will be accomplished is made more explicit in SIL International's *Purpose and Ends Policies* where it states: "SIL's special concern is for those language communities that lack access to the Scriptures in

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[13] Project personnel includes the translation team, the inter-church committee, and the community mobilizers.

[14] "Legislative Manual of the Cameroon Branch" (SIL Cameroon, February 3, 2012), 4. Bold is original.

the languages and media that best serve them".[15] It is the "media that best serve them"

which is most germane to this thesis-project. One of SIL's primary goals is to provide

language communities with access to part, or all, of Scripture and related materials in

their mother tongue.[16] A language community will be in a position to provide their

people with access to vernacular Scriptures once the following conditions are met:

- Materials are locally available.

- Materials are available in usable media which are appropriate to

    the situation, including print and/or non-print forms.

- Where print media are appropriate, literacy skills are adequate

    within the community.

All of the participants in this Scripture Engagement task can then use these criteria to

move the community from access, to use, to impact, in order to attain the goal of life-

transformation.

    In Chapter 3, we reviewed Wayne Dye's list of eight conditions which can determine

the success vernacular Scripture has on a community.[17] We look at them again below.

According to Dye, translated Scriptures and Scripture Engagement realities must fulfill

some the following criteria at some level: (1) appropriate language, dialect, and

orthography; (2) appropriate translation;[18] (3) accessible forms of Scripture; (4)

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[15] Robinson, "SIL International Board Policy Manual," *Insite Wiki*, (November 2013): 6, https://www.wiki.insitehome.org/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=15206916.

[16] Robinson, 49.

[17] T. Wayne Dye, "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement—Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 89–98.

[18] A translation can be done in a particular style along the literal-dynamic-equivalence continuum,

background knowledge of the hearers; (5) availability of and access to Scripture; (6)

spiritual hunger of community members; (7) freedom to commit to the Christian faith;

and (8) partnership between the translators and other stakeholders. The degree to

which these conditions are met will determine the overall level of engagement that a

community of believers will have with Scripture. For the purposes of this small-scale

study, I have limited myself to the factors that meet conditions 3 and 5 only.[19]

Harriet Hill has developed a thorough and practical set of guidelines to evaluate the

impact of different Scripture media formats. In "SU Assessment Guidelines", she

proposes, in agreement with Dr. Brian Auday, that we collect both qualitative and

quantitative research data.[20] I believe that the qualitative data is more valuable in this

research, because it elicits people's preferences, opinions, and attitudes. These are

responses that can also be quantified, thus satisfying both types of inquiry.

Parameters of the Research

I chose my research topic based on the activities we were already doing in the

Kwasio translation project, as well as activities we were about to carry out. In one sense,

this thesis-project accelerated our involvement in Scripture Engagement. For years, I

had been thinking about the merits of literacy and orality, including the incongruity

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targeting particular genres (e.g., narrative or genealogy), and using language that may be more "literary" or more colloquial, toward the ultimate goal of producing a text that is clear, natural, and accurate.

[19] As it concerns the other conditions, we believe that conditions 1, 7, and 8 have been well met. Condition 2 was not well met for the parable being tested in my research, but has been improved in the translation of Luke's Gospel.

[20] Bryan C. Auday, *Research Methodology*, MP3 (South Hamilton, Massachusetts: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2008), accessed January 3, 2013, https://sakai.gcts.edu/portal/site/90032/page /660acebe-80b4-4f07-8027-d731aae20b40.

between our organization's philosophy and practice. It was my desire to test the practicality of these two modes of communication. As soon as the Kwasio alphabet was finalized, the translators began translating the first of nine parables. Meanwhile a nascent literacy manual was in process, but was not available before the Parable of the Prodigal Son media was sold.

Before creating the questionnaires, I reviewed a lecture by Dr. Bryan C. Auday, titled "Research Methodology."[21] Then, I submitted my proposal to him for consultation, summarizing the background, setting, and approach I would use for my research. He approved my procedure, including the post-testing follow-up interviews, and added that it was "very ambitious."[22] He offered comments on selecting survey locations, eliciting more detailed information in the questionnaires (interviews), and confirmed my colleague's suggestion to distance myself from the data collection process.[23]

Assessment Instruments—Questionnaires & Interviews

I had planned on using four criteria for evaluating the results—two quantitative and two qualitative: (1) the number of sales of, or expressed preference for, specific products, (2) items still owned and used, at time of follow-up interview; (3) reactions and comments from respondents on the initial questionnaire, plus observations and testimonies recorded in the surveyors' reports, including non-verbal responses; and (4) how much Scripture content the respondents could recall at the follow-up interview.

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[21] Auday, *Research Methodology*.
[22] Auday, "Research Methodology Consultation Comments," March 13, 2013.
[23] Auday, "DMin Consultation Assignment," May 30, 2013.

I adapted my questionnaires from the Rapid Appraisal forms used for Sociolinguistic language surveys by SIL Cameroon.[24] They were originally designed by Jürg Stalder to assess habits of language use and Bible translation interest. The questionnaires had been used on dozens of language surveys in central Africa for years, undergoing continual ameliorations. My wife and I had the experience of utilizing these questionnaires on 26 languages (and numerous dialects) in six Regions of Cameroon during 2000 and 2001. We modified the questions as we evaluated them after each survey. We learned to obtain more reliable responses by knowing: what questions to ask; how to word them; avoiding yes-no questions; and the importance of asking the same questions in several different ways.

Using that knowledge, I was confident that I could design an effective questionnaire for this study. My primary objective was to elicit people's opinions about the Scripture materials. Our goal was to interview everyone who was exposed to the materials, whether or not they purchased any. An initial, in-depth questionnaire asked which product(s) they purchased, which one they like most, and what other media they would like to see in the future. It also elicited personal demographic information, so that the data could be sorted according these descriptors, in the event such data might reveal tendencies particular to certain groups of people. This initial questionnaire was meant to serve as a secondary record of the quantity of items sold. Surveyors were to use the Initial Questionnaire at the point-of-sale and complete the Follow-up Questionnaire 1-3 months later.

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[24] Jürg Stalder, "Rapid Appraisal," *Notes on Literature in Use and Language Programs* 48, no. 6 (1996).

A supplementary one-page follow-up questionnaire was attached to the preliminary questionnaire, for the purpose of re-interviewing the same respondents at a later date, provided the surveyors could re-locate them. My original intent was for them to collect new feedback after a prolonged exposure to the materials, so that we might know how much people were still using the Scripture products. Thus, we could see how their attitudes might have changed and if they were using the media differently. The Follow-up questionnaire was designed to reveal whether each item's appeal would last. I wrote the questionnaires in French and had all of the content translated into Kwasio, so that the forms would be bilingual. As such, the surveyors could easily and correctly ask the questions in Kwasio or French.[25]

Research Procedure

I wrestled with the idea of how to implement the actual data collection procedure. My initial idea was to accompany the surveyors who would distribute and sell the Scripture materials. In this way, I could actively participate in the demonstration and make sure the digital media was working. I thought of interviewing the respondents myself, so that I would be able to reformulate misunderstood questions that the surveyors might not be able to explain; and I could ask clarifying questions to ensure that I understood the participants' responses. However, I had a bit of reticence that my presence might skew the results.[26] The Scripture Engagement consultant agreed that my

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[25] Having both languages, I hoped, would help to disambiguate any of my unclear questions.

[26] In many African cultures, people show respect their visitors and outsiders (esp. foreigners) by trying to be as agreeable as possible. As a result, they may modify their responses in an attempt to please a foreigner and thereby save face. Of course, it is complicated by differing cultural expectations, what the

direct involvement might influence people's responses.[27] She suggested that I relinquish

my role in the data collection phase, and give that responsibility to nationals: Kwasio

people and other Cameroonians. Dr. Auday also concurred with this decision.

I followed their advice, in keeping with the SIL philosophy of local ownership and

initiative. I decided to have the Kwasio community mobilizers be the *surveyors* who

would conduct the interviews and fill out the questionnaires. I felt that they could make

the questionnaires more personal and interactive in the mother tongue and relate to

them in culturally appropriate ways. These surveyors had already been working in the

community for two years visiting pastors and chiefs to inform them of the translation

project and language development activities. So, they potentially knew many of the

audiences they might visit.

I also distanced myself one step further by using a mediator, the main Kwasio

translator, Nouangama Yigui Valère. In every domain of the translation project during

our last term, I had been relating to him, rather than communicating directly to

individual members of the Kwasio team.[28] He was the liaison between myself,

representing SIL, and the members of the church committee who were supervising the

surveyors. In almost every instance, I communicated to the committee indirectly

through him on how to carry out the research. On several occasions in person and in

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respondent thinks the foreigner wants to hear and how the foreigner should interpret the answer.

[27] Ginger Bradley, "Strategic Planning and Review--Ideas for SE Media Materials," December 14, 2011. Sociolinguist, William Labov, coined the term "observer's paradox" to describe the influence on the results of the investigator's presence.

[28] Our last term ran from July 2011 to June 2014. This is the period during which the thesis-project was birthed and executed.

writing, I explained the process to him. Then, I entrusted him the task of instructing the surveyors on how to use the questionnaires in an interview format.

The project coordinator, and the inter-church committee, furnished the surveyors with the Scripture materials and an ample supply of questionnaires. The surveyors also carried with them a cell phone, laptop, or borrowed a TV and DVD player when available. All these materials were brought to various church gatherings and meetings with local officials in the towns of Lolodorf, Bipindi, Kribi, a few villages, and a palm plantation. The Scripture materials were distributed and the data was collected from questionnaires and the surveyors' reports from November 2013 to November 2014.

Thesis-Project Implementation: Distribution, Sale, & Interviews

I originally planned for the research to take place in the three principal towns in the Kwasio-speaking area. These three locations lie along the same East-West axis road: Kribi on the coast, Bipindi about halfway inland, and Lolodorf at the furthest point east. However, the availability of venues and travel costs became the deciding factors.[29] The same selection of products would be displayed at each site, at the same price. Ideally, the surveyors would have the possibility of demonstrating all three digital formats on the three types of electronic devices: computer, DVD player, and phone.

The surveyors carried the questionnaires with them to fill out as they interviewed the people who purchased or viewed the materials. They were instructed to go through the questionnaire item-by-item, writing down the responses for each participant in a

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[29] It was the strategy of CIED-LAK-TRAB members to visit some marginal places, such as the SOCOPALM oil plantation and Campo town. At times, the surveyors went where they could afford to go.

separate questionnaire. They were also told to record the number of each item sold in each location. I also asked the surveyors for a one-page evaluation of their impressions and observations. This turned out to be very useful, as it supplied me with a concise summary of the surveyors' experiences, observations, and their own interpretations of the obstacles they encountered, inadequacies of the materials, and flaws in the research process. After all the data was collected, I compared the numbers of items sold and evaluated the verbal feedback from both participants and surveyors.

C. SUMMARY

I designed this study to assess the immediate interest in new Scripture products, as well as to ascertain their short-term appeal. I planned a thesis-project that would most easily accommodate current activities in the translation project, but would also facilitate its advancement and impact on the community. I chose parameters for my research that would be manageable for everyone involved in terms of the time, energy, and resources invested.

I decided to test different media formats tailored to the characteristics of the community. Then, I formulated a reasonable hypothesis derived from recent Scripture Engagement insights on literacy, orality, and technology. At the time I began my research, the translation team was about to translate the parable of the Prodigal Son. I chose media materials, with input from colleagues, then created six media formats to be produced locally. I created two questionnaires: one to be used in an initial interview when people first purchased or viewed the Scripture products; and a second one to be completed in a follow-up interview at a much later date. These survey instruments were

based on other questionnaires tested for years in the field. My experience using them in similar contexts, helped me to adapt them to my own goals.

The inter-church committee and the coordinator set the prices, divided up the materials for the three towns, printed the questionnaires, and selected surveyors to carry out the research. I counted on the project coordinator to pass on my instructions to the surveyors about how to fill out the questionnaires during the interviews. They were also asked to give written reports on their observations and an assessment of the process. These would supplement the data from the questionnaires and help me interpret ambiguous data. I was confident that my methodology would generate sufficient and practical feedback.

CHAPTER 5: OUTCOMES

A. DATA COLLECTION RESULTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

In this chapter, I review the results of the study I conducted on the Kwasio Scripture materials. A total of 104 survey questionnaires were collected and returned between January and June 2014. I sorted the data according to several of the categories elicited by the questionnaires. For each sort, I tabulated the number of interviewees who gave a specific response. From these I calculated percentages for the research queries that were pertinent to my research. The results are listed in the tables of the first section below. In subsequent sections, I present observations from the surveyors, recommend other Scripture Engagement activities for the translation project, and propose some modified Scripture Engagement research for the future.

The Two Questionnaires & Interviews

My primary research goal was to find out which Scripture products are the most appealing to the Kwasio people, in terms of: immediate appeal and short-term appeal. A major setback for determining the degree of short-term appeal stemmed from the large number of questionnaires that had no follow-up interview. Table 1, below, shows the number of questionnaires that had no follow-up, those where follow-up was done on the same day, and those actually conducted on a different day (as was intended).

Table 1: Follow-up Interviews completed and time elapsed from Initial Interview

Follow-Up Questionnaires: Elapsed Time	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents	Average No. of Days

No Follow-Up Done	4	4%	N/A
Same Day Follow-Up	70	67%	0
Follow-Up Later: 2-92 Days	30	29%	12
Total	104	100%	

Less than one-third of the questionnaires included a proper follow-up interview, that is, one conducted at a later date. For that one-third, there was a vast difference in the amount of time elapsed from the date of the first interview to the second. These interviews were done between two and ninety-two days later, yielding an average gap of 12 days between interviews. Such a range is too large for calculating meaningful statistics.[1] However, from this data we can still make some general short-term predictions about people's attitudes toward future Scripture media.

Responses to the Scripture Materials

The following two tables, Tables 2 & 3, show the results sorted according to my two original criteria for assessing the appeal of each media format: (a) the number of items sold for each product and (b) the product preferred by each respondent. Several outcomes were different than expected. Data for Table 2, below, is derived from the Initial Questionnaire No. 1. It displays the number of each product people purchased.

Table 2: Number of each Scripture product purchased

Purchased Products[2]	Wall Banner	A5 Leaflet	Color Book	DVD	VCD	SD	ABC[3]	Print	Non Print
One Product Alone	0	22	26	10	1	4	0		
W/ Other Products	2	32	38	13	2	2	1		
Total Products	2	54	64	23	3	6	1	120	32

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[1] The number of days ranged from two to ninety-two—unhelpful for calculating standard deviation. Besides, this study was only looking for general tendencies in people's preferences and opinions.

[2] Only one respondent made no purchase. Two respondents did not cite a preference.

[3] One respondent commented on the Alphabet Chart he purchased the previous year.

Percentage of total	1%	36%	42%	15%	2%	4%		79%	21%

The wall banners and VCDs were only purchased by a few people, because the

former was too expensive and VCD players are being replaced by DVD players. Only six

SD cards were sold—a fact later explained by user error and incompatible devices. Yet,

this is the item that was purchased most often together with other products. The DVDs,

on the other hand, sold more than the two other non-print media formats combined. As

expected, the Coloring Books were extremely popular and sold more than any other

format. The A5 Leaflet also sold well, likely due to its low selling price and its

portability.[4] I did not expect people to be very interested in this media format, since it is

the most basic in its presentation, and the least interesting of all the materials.

However, its affordability compensates for its simplicity.

Table 3 below lists the products and the number of people who preferred each one,

elicited by the Follow-up Questionnaire. The figures in this table are not significantly

different from those in Table 2 (products purchased). It became evident that most of the

respondents did not communicate a clear preference.[5] This scant difference makes it

difficult to evaluate advantages of one product over another. The figures, however, do

indicate a slight increase in preference for non-print media over print media. We will see

that this discrepancy is cleared up by the surveyor's reports (in Section B), which show

that the real differences are actually greater than the questionnaires revealed.

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[4] One respondent said that he could easily fold it and place it in his pocket.
[5] Most respondents did not seem to understand the idea of selecting only one preferred item. Instead, they checked all the formats they purchased or all the ones they would like to have.

Table 3: People's Scripture product preferences

Preferred Products	Banner	A5	Color Book	DVD	VCD	SD	Total	Print	Non Print
One Product Alone	0	19	26	16	0	4			
W/ Other Products	1	24	31	14	3	3			
Total No.	1	43	57	30	3	7	141	101	40
Percentage of Total	1%	30%	40%	21%	2%	5%		72%	28%

The most significant difference the between products purchased and the products preferred was the 30% increase in the number of people who would buy the DVD format.[6] In other words, a greater number of people preferred the DVD than actually purchased it. This tells us that people would like to have DVDs in the future, provided: they work, people have the means to play them, and the price to content ratio is higher. The cost of the DVD was not commensurate with the amount of content loaded onto it.[7] In contrast, the proportion of people favoring print media over non-print media decreased with this indicator, revealing a slightly greater interest in non-print.

Preference for the SD card increased by only one person, while interest in the wall banner decreased by one. The meager interest in the SD cards might be attributed to the distributors' belief that most of the SD cards were non-operational. As a result, many potential buyers were unable to see it demonstrated. Perhaps this fact deterred people from expressing a stronger preference for them. It is hoped that SD cards will be much more popular in the future, if we ensure that distributors know how to operate them, the amount of media content is increased, and the price reduced.

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[6] This percentage marks the increase from 23 purchased to 30 preferred.
[7] Either the price needs to be lowered, the content increased, or both.

Print Versus Non-Print Media

The two columns on the right of Tables 2 & 3 show the products split into two groups: print and non-print media. Overall, our survey sample showed that people purchased almost four times (4x) the number of print formats than non-print formats. In the table of preferred products, the difference was a bit lower, with print media less than three times (3x) the amount of non-print. That is, people did not express as strong a preference for print media as was shown by the table of what people purchased. Nevertheless, the contrast between the two major media types is overwhelmingly in favor of print media.[8] I suspect that, if we could reduce the technical obstacles and reduce the price, people would show a much greater interest in non-print media.[9]

Evaluating Costs—Media Prices

As I explained above, the choice of products people purchased is likely related to the cost—what they could afford. If cost was not prohibitive, I suspect that the results would be vastly different. In order to understand the price factor influencing the items people purchased, we should consider the monetary value of each Scripture product. Table 4 below lists the price of each media format, shown in dollars.[10]

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[8] This can be partly explained by the price factor—print media being more affordable than the electronic media and the incompatibility of the digital media with many of the devices that were used.

[9] In the next section I consider the added influence of price on the results of this study.

[10] The Scripture products were sold in Central African Francs (CFA), which fluctuates with the Euro's exchange rate against the dollar. The average exchange rate at the time was 500 francs CFA per dollar. The items were priced with the following amounts: 200 CFA, 600 CFA, 10,000 CFA, 750 CFA, and 2,000 CFA, respectively.

Table 4: Prices of the Scripture media products

Scripture Media Format	Price Per Item
A5 Leaflet	$0.40
Coloring Book w/ Color Pencils	$1.25
6-foot Wall Banner	$20.00
DVD	$1.50
CD/VCD	$1.50
SD Card	$4.00

We can see that the A5 leaflet is the most affordable format, followed by the coloring book. However, the coloring book has more to offer: its A4 pages are double the size of the A5 leaflet; there are 14 sheets of paper instead of one; it has a hard glossy cover; and it came with a set of colored pencils. The committee which decided on the price of this item set it lower than cost, making it a much more attractive deal than the other products. Besides this, I believe that it is more tangible than the non-print media formats that require a playing device to view and hear them. There was very little content on the DVDs and CDs to make it worth the expense; and the SD cards were sold at a proportionately higher price—more than twice that of the other digital media.

The next table, Table 5, presents the reasons respondents gave for purchasing the Kwasio Scripture products. The top three reasons deal with literacy. The majority of respondents (68%) directly mentioned their interest in reading their mother tongue. Almost as many people (61%) expressed a desire to learn the new orthography. Another 38% said they wanted to teach other people,[11] while 28% wanted to show the materials

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[11] Those who wanted to teach others did not specify whether they meant teaching literacy or teaching the content, although I suspect most of them were alluding to literacy.

to others. The top three reasons highlight again the strong motivation for literacy and

print materials over non-print.[12]

Table 5: Reasons people purchased products[13]

Top Reasons Products Purchased	No.	Percent of Respondents Who Expressed This
To Read	71	68%
Learn the Orthography	63	61%
Teach Others	40	38%
Show Others	29	28%
To Listen and/or View	29	28%
Use in Church	17	16%
For the Technology	8	8%
Personal Learning	2	2%
Other Reasons[14]	4	4%

In regards to the non-print media, 28% voiced a desire to listen or view the digital

content. Nearly one out of six people (16%) shared an interest in using the Scripture

materials in church. This is a very encouraging prospect indeed, even though they did

not identify specific formats. Eight percent (8%) said they bought it for the technology,

while 2% stated that it was for personal learning (although they did not specify what this

entailed, either).[15] Another 4% gave a combination of several other reasons for

purchasing the materials.

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[12] As far back as 1930, the Kwasio demanded a Bible translation in their language from the first missionaries to their people. Several neighboring languages—Bulu, Ewondo, and Basaa—have had the Bible in their language for decades. The Kwasio place a high value on the prestige of possessing a printed Bible, perhaps valuing it above the desire to read and understand it.

[13] Each respondent provided numerous comments. Therefore, percentages will not add up to 100%.

[14] One person gave each of the following reasons for buying a particular media: one bought the SD card to store data on leftover space; one bought the A5 leaflet because it was affordable; one used the SD card for listening and for prayers; one bought a DVD for personal entertainment.

[15] Their goal for learning is probably related to the desire for literacy and orthography.

Bibles in Other Languages & Reading Frequency

Before we review the results for reading frequency of the Kwasio Scripture products,

let us first look at the reading frequency of Scripture in other languages. The Initial

Questionnaire asked the interviewees which language version(s) of the Bible they own

and how much they read it. Table 6 summarizes the results of this query on Bible

ownership and reading frequency. Out of the 104 respondents, 93% reported that they

have at least one Bible at home. Among this group, only 7% stated that they never read

it, which means that 86% of the entire sample read some Scripture from time to time.

Among all Bible owners more than one-third (36%) claim to read it regularly.[16]

Table 6: Bible ownership and reading frequency

Bible Ownership & Reading Frequency	No.	Percent	Bible Readers
Bible Owners	97	93%	
Never Read	7	7%	
Rarely Read	13	13%	93%
Read Occasionally	42	43%	
Read Regularly	35	36%	

Table 7 shows the number and percentage of respondents separated according to

the Bible versions they own and reading frequency. It lists three categories: those who

have a Bible in French only, those who have a Bible in a Cameroonian language only, and

those who have both. This table also displays the number of respondents who read a

Bible regularly within each of these three language groupings. One-third (31%) of those

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[16] The Scripture products were sold primarily at church gatherings. Yet, even among self-proclaimed believers with a church affiliation, only a minority read a Bible regularly.

who only own a French Bible read it regularly, 44% of those who whereas own a Bible(s) in a Cameroonian language read it regularly. For those who own Bibles in multiple languages (French and at least one other language), the number of them who read regularly rises to 70%.

Table 7: Bible reading frequency by language version

Bible Reading Frequency by Language	No.	Percent	Read Regularly	Percent
Own Scripture in French Only	78	80.4%	24	31%
Own Scripture in a Cameroonian Language[17]	9	9.3%	4	44%
Own Scripture in French & Other Languages[18]	10	10.3%	7	70%

The figures in Table 7 reveal that multilingual Scripture ownership may be one factor contributing to a greater level of engagement.[19] We can tentatively conclude that people are more likely to engage with Scripture in an African language than with French.[20] From these facts we may be able to predict that the level of engagement will rise even more as an increasing amount of Kwasio Scripture becomes available.

Literacy in Kwasio

No literacy training had been done up to the time of the distribution of the first Scripture materials.[21] Nevertheless, approximately 500 large alphabet charts had been

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[17] The most owned Cameroon language Bible is the Bulu version, followed by Ewondo, Batanga, and old Kwasio portions. The data in this table are derived from the Initial Questionnaire.

[18] In addition to the languages named in the footnote above, one person also listed English and Latin.

[19] I recognize that this sample of respondents here is quite small from a statistical standpoint.

[20] French continues to remain a "foreign" language, proving to be difficult for communicating Scriptural truths in the Africa's languages and cultures in a meaningful way.

[21] A shrinking minority of elderly men were privileged to attend literacy classes at the Kwasio Schools in the 1940s. The new orthography is close enough to what they learned as children so that learning to read it can be accomplished fairly quickly with minimal training.

printed and sold in 2012, well before the Scripture products went out. This, at least, allowed people to become familiarized with the alphabet, plus 25 words in the new orthography.[22]

In order to determine the level of literacy needed, it is important for us to know in advance how many people can already read Kwasio. The figures in Table 8, below, reveal that a mere 41% of Kwasio people surveyed are able to read the mother tongue.[23] Of the 59% who are unable to read Kwasio, all but one said they want to acquire the literacy skills necessary to read it. With the exception of three respondents, everyone desires training classes, literacy manuals, and books to read. These self-reported literacy rates are a rough, but helpful, indicator of how much literacy training is needed and what kind of products might help more people gain access to the Scriptures.

Table 8: Self-reported Mother-Tongue reading proficiency

Kwasio Literacy	No.	Sub-Total	Percent with & without Kwasio Literacy Skills
YES	34		
SOME	9	43	41% with some level of literacy in Kwasio
NO	61		59% with no literacy in Kwasio

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[22] From January-March 2013, my wife and I, with the help of Nouangama, created a Kwasio transition manual: a literacy primer for teaching people already literate in French to read and write Kwasio. We tested it in a gathering of committee members in Kribi. In June 2015, a literacy workshop was conducted in Yaoundé to produce a primer for non-literates and to train literacy teachers. Training of literacy teachers continues into mid-2016, with still no literacy classes yet to be held for the population.

[23] Data from the Initial Questionnaire.

Now, I turn to the results of reading frequency for Kwasio Scripture. As I mentioned earlier, there were very few follow-up surveys done, extremely limiting the size of the sample on which reading frequency could be determined. Nevertheless, I wanted to know how often individuals read print materials or how often they viewed or listened to the non-print media. I wanted to assess their preferences for specific media formats in order to determine the likelihood that they would regularly access Scripture materials in the future. The results of how frequently the respondents engaged with the products are listed below in Table 9.[24]

Table 9: How often respondents used the materials over time

Product Reading Frequency	No.		Percent
PRINT MEDIA			
Read Regularly	13	24	54.2%
Read Occasionally or Rarely	3	24	12.5%
Stopped Reading	5	24	20.8%
Unable to Read			12.5%
NON-PRINT MEDIA			
View & Listen Regularly	8	9	88.9%

In Table 8, we saw that 59% of the respondents reported to be illiterate in Kwasio. Among the 24 respondents who bought print media and completed a follow-up

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[24] Data from the Follow-up Questionnaire.

questionnaire, only 12.5% indicated they were unable to read the Kwasio materials at the time of the second interview. Nine respondents who claimed to be illiterate in Kwasio, later reported an ability to read the Kwasio materials. We can account for this incongruence by three independent factors. First of all, some of the people who bought print media also bought non-print media, which afforded them the benefit of hearing someone read the text aloud. This provided them with an informal means of learning the orthography, thus compensating for their illiteracy in Kwasio. Moreover, their literacy skills in French may have enabled them to decode the text.[25] Furthermore, the illustrations might have reinforced their ability to decipher the text as well. Several respondents mentioned using the illustrations to help them read, perhaps leading them also to declare a higher literacy rate.

More than half (54%) of the respondents who received a follow-up interview reported that they were still reading the materials regularly at that time. This is much higher than the reading frequencies in Table 8 for those who owned a single Bible in French or a Cameroonian language (31% and 44% respectively). The percentage of people who purchased non-print media and responded to the follow-up questionnaire represented a significantly small sample, only nine people. Eight out of these nine (89%) claimed to be viewing, listening, or reading this material regularly at the time of the second interview, indicating a proportionally higher level than print media.[26]

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[25] Some of the respondents may also be familiar with the old Kwasio orthography. Only a few minor modifications have been made to the new orthography, which was meant facilitate the decoding of words that were ambiguous in the previous orthography. Additionally, some respondents may have been inclined to answer in the positive, hesitant to expose their inability to read their mother tongue.

[26] Respondents had the possibility of reading the text in the audio-video version. This increase in regular use of non-print media over print represents a 65% higher rate, though not statistically reliable.

Literature Interest

The Initial Questionnaire also asked the interviewees what kinds of books they would like to see in the future. Every one of those surveyed (100%) responded to this query. Table 10 summarizes the feedback on people's preferences for different varieties of literature. The respondents named 22 specific types of books. I have subsumed the majority of them under "instructional books" and "other literature."

Table 10: Kwasio literature interests

Interest in Scripture and Other Books	104	Percent
Kwasio Bible	82	79%
Any & All Kinds of Books	34	33%
Instructional Books	9	9%
Small Books and Leaflets	7	7%
News	6	6%
Other Literature[27]	16	15%

An overwhelming majority (79%) expressed a strong interest in having the entire Bible in Kwasio.[28] This data echoes again the strong desire of the Kwasio people to

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[27] Other products people would like to see include the following: Christian movies, illustrated books, stories, fables, hymnbooks, letters, books on Kwasio culture, health & agriculture books, reading books, national anthem, Christian books, and useful, edifying, or affordable, books.

[28] Naturally, for most Roman Catholics, this includes the deutero-canonical books.

possess Scripture in the mother tongue. Aside from the Bible, one-third of the respondents (33%) said they would like to see examples of every kind of book. Others stated an interest in having instructional books (9), small booklets (7), and news (6).[29]

Anecdotal Feedback: Comments from Respondents

A substantial part of the Follow-up Questionnaire was devoted to eliciting anecdotal feedback from the respondents. Several open-ended questions invited them to pose questions, make comments, give opinions, and make recommendations. The result was a combination of both positive and negative reactions and advice. This anecdotal feedback is summarized in Table 11, below. I have attempted to group their comments under headings of a similar theme. I arranged their responses roughly in order from the most to least frequent comment made.

Table 11: Comments from respondents:

Positive and Negative Feedback Topics	No.	Percent
LITERACY		
Simplify the Orthography; It's Too Hard to Read	55	57%
Want a Literacy Primer, Syllabary, or Pronunciation Guide	18	19%
Improve the Translation to Make It Easier to Read: Natural & Clear	11	11%
PRODUCT QUANTITY		
Produce More Scripture & Finish the Whole Bible	29	30%
Work Faster & Use Resources That Others Have Produced	28	29%
Encourage the Translation Team to Persevere	25	26%
PRODUCT QUALITY		
Work Done Is Commendable & Good; It Is Well-Liked & Interesting	20	21%
Speaker's Accent & Dialect Bad: Mispronounced, Wrong Vocabulary	14	14%
Appreciate the Images	8	8%
For Images Use Real People or Drawings of Africans	5	5%
PRODUCT ACCESSIBILITY		

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[29] Respondents listed Kwasio books on: vocabulary, such as a dictionary; grammar; literacy primer or syllabary; and school textbooks.

Want Lower Prices; Make the Products More Affordable	10	10%
Too Many Formats of the Same Small Portion of Scripture	4	4%
Improve the Distribution of Scripture Materials	3	3%
PERSONNEL		
Involve More Leaders, Denominations, & People from Other Dialects	19	20%
Want Project Members to Be Humble, Honest, & Altruistic	6	6%

The comments, under the "Literacy" heading, corroborated the other research data from sales and preferences. Respondents communicated in their own words an undeniable desire for print media and literacy in Kwasio. More than half (57%) expressed this sentiment in their request for a simplified orthography. One out of five people (19%) specifically asked for vernacular literacy training. Their desire for literacy is also reflected in the responses of 11% of the interviewees, who petitioned for a translation that is easier to read. Based on the sorting of their comments, I deduced that they desire a translation which employs natural language to facilitate their ease of reading and comprehension.

People's comments under "Product Quantity" reflect the longing to have more Kwasio Scripture. A third of those surveyed (30%) are anxiously waiting for a translation of the entire Bible. Some mentioned having, at least, the New Testament. They absolutely expected, by this time, to see NT books go beyond the Gospels and Acts that were first published as long ago as 1969. Nearly the same number of people (29%) suggested using the translation efforts done by others over the years to help speed up

the translation process.[30] A quarter of the respondents (26%) encouraged the translators to continue making progress, urging them not to give up.

On the subject of "Product Quality", 21% of the respondents commended the translation team for the efforts they have made thus far. Interviewees said that they liked the translation and the quality of language work being done. Several of them added that what they have seen so far is interesting, even to their non-Kwasio friends. In contrast, numerous respondents (14%) critiqued the oral recording in the digital media. They disliked the speaker's accent, stating that some words were mispronounced. They even found fault with his dialect, citing improper vocabulary use in certain places. In contrast, a number of people (8%), voiced appreciation for the illustrations. However, a handful (5%) of people expressed dissatisfaction that the drawings were not contextualized because they depicted Hebrew people instead of black Africans. They would prefer to see "real people" instead.[31]

In the "Product Accessibility" category of remarks, 10% of the interviewees asked for lower prices on the Scripture materials. One person stated that they could not afford to buy a single item. However, the materials actually sold at or below cost. Yet, the respondents did not deem the product's content proportionate with the selling price. Several people (4%) stated that there were too many formats for one small portion of

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[30] Respondents mentioned the manuscripts done by a Catholic priest, Father Nicodème Bouh, who translated the entire Bible, including the Apocryphal books; Colonel Boutouri, who translated the NT on his own; and several other portions of Scripture, such as the Psalms, translated by various pastors from the EPA church over the years. The translation team is currently using Bouh's translation and pastor Jacques Ngally's translation of the Gospels and Acts, published by the Cameroon Bible Society (*Alliance Biblique du Cameroun*). Presently, the other translations have not been deemed helpful to the process.

[31] It is unclear if this refers to the use of photo or film.

Scripture. They did not understand that we were trying to test the potential of different

formats; and it appears that this was not always explained by the surveyors. A few

individuals (3%) said that distribution of the products needs improvement.

Under the heading "Personnel", 20% of the respondents recommended including

more leaders among the members of the translation team, including a greater diversity

of denominations.[32] They also expressed concern that there are not enough participants

in the translation project who come from the minority dialect.[33] Several others (6%)

called for project members to be humble people of integrity, who are not self-seeking,

but who wish to serve the community.[34] In sum, the wide variety of responses the

interviewees gave has provided the committee and the translation team useful

feedback for improving not only the translation, but numerous details of the entire

language project, including a representative composition on the committee.

Data Sorts

Before moving on to comments from the surveyors, I present three other groupings

of the data generated by the Initial Questionnaire. From the outset of my research, I had

intended to sort the respondents' purchases and preferences according to location,

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[32] The inter-church committee (CIEDKAKTRAB) exists to respond to this concern. Those who expressed this comment would like to see representatives from all the denominations, especially the larger traditional ones, such as the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian (l'Église Presbytérienne du Cameroun), and African Protestant (l'Église Protestante Africaine) churches on the translation team, even though they are represented on the ICC.

[33] The majority of Kwasio speakers come from the Mbvumbo dialect, who live inland from Bipindi to Lolodorf, and a dozen kilometers north and east of Lolodorf. Speakers of the minority Mabi (Mabea) dialect live in Kribi and in villages several kilometers north and south, and halfway to Bipindi. Most members of this group feel under-represented. The ICC is responsible for resolving this dialect issue and assuring involvement across the language community.

[34] They fear that some of the people who get involved might be seeking membership to satisfy their aspirations for power and renown.

education, and church affiliation. I was interested in knowing whether or not there were differences of appeal based on these three criteria. These results are only moderately informative. The next three paragraphs describe the outcome of these queries.

Data sort by location

There was no significant difference between the three central locations. It was difficult to ascertain the limits of this parameter, because the surveyors visited villages surrounding the three major towns and even went beyond them to some more distant locations. However, there was a slight indication that people from Kribi bought more non-print media, followed by Lolodorf, then Bipindi. This makes sense, because there are more Kwasio with higher incomes living in Kribi. Lolodorf, to some degree, has been the area of origin for many of those who have procured stable employment, whereas Bipindi remains relatively undeveloped in terms of infrastructure and economics.

Data sort by education

The difference in what people purchased in relation to their education was slight, but not insignificant. The data showed that respondents with higher education bought twice as much non-print media as those with less education.[35] I can only speculate that there is a correlation between education and one's amount of disposable income, such that they can afford the electronic devices needed to play the digital media.

Data sort by church affiliation

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[35] I split the sample roughly into two equal groups according to their levels of education: those who attended school to about age 13, and possibly went on to an apprenticeship; and those who completed high school, college, or some professional certificate.

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People affiliated with most of the churches bought a combination of different media types—some print, some non-print, some both. However, I observed a marked correspondence between the amount of print media purchased and interviewees affiliated with the EPA church. They almost exclusively bought print media compared to those from other denominations. It appears that their traditional sentiment of having a Kwasio Bible since the first missionaries continues to perpetuate.

Conclusions from the Questionnaire-Interviews

An overwhelming majority of the interviewees purchased and expressed a preference for print media over non-print media, despite their lack of vernacular literacy skills. Results from the questionnaires alone showed that the Kwasio most desire two of the print formats: the coloring book and the A5 Leaflet. These conclusions were reiterated in the reasons people gave for purchasing the media, the types of literature they would like to see, and by the general comments they made.

B. REPORTS FROM SURVEYORS: OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the pair of questionnaires, this study benefited from the written and verbal observations of the surveyors themselves. What they heard during the interviews helped explain people's responses and cleared up many ambiguities. Their comments also underscored the ineffectiveness of the questionnaires to generate reliable data.

Positive Feedback

Direct reports from the surveyors fill in the gaps from the questionnaires, but also give a somewhat different account of the situation on several key points. Benjamin

Yinde testifies that the Scripture materials were well received by all Kwasio speakers and "friends" who appreciated the quality of the products.[36] According to Ernest Guialpfouo, the Kwasio community enthusiastically and joyfully welcomed this first set of Scripture materials on the Prodigal Son parable.[37] Overall, the respondents expressed a hopeful expectation that many more Scripture portions will become available in the near future.

Print media & literacy

Many interviewees expressed contentment in seeing an official orthography that would standardize communication in print. The surveyors confirmed that print media sold much more easily because of the lower prices. Among the print materials, people preferred the coloring book, despite it being more expensive than the A5 leaflet. Valère Nouangama reported that parents bought the coloring books, with the belief that it would attract the interest of their children.[38] They are concerned that their children are not learning Kwasio well; and they want, above all, to familiarize them with the Word of God from a young age. The coloring book reads easier with its multiple pages of large images accompanied by a single descriptive sentence.

Audio-video materials

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[36] Benjamin Yinde, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*, Observations and commentary (Bipindi, Cameroon: CIED-LAK-TRAB, November 13, 2014).

[37] Ernest Guialpfouo, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*, Observations and commentary (Kribi, Cameroon: CIED-LAK-TRAB, June 25, 2014). He is the late secretary of CIED-LAK-TRAB.

[38] Valère Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*, Observations and commentary (Kribi, Cameroon: CIED-LAK-TRAB, April 3, 2014).

Despite the strong interest in print media, everyone was very excited to see the SD cards, CDs, and DVDs that would enable them to listen to the recording. They wished to buy these non-print media, but found them to be too expensive. Contrary to how the interviewees answered the questionnaire, Jean Mbimong reported that everyone showed greater interest in and appreciation for the non-print media, because they had not yet learned to read Kwasio.[39] They are useful for getting people accustomed to reading, and for increasing comprehension of the Scripture content. He says that the CD and DVD were the most preferred, because many people can view them at once, and they are replete with captivating images.[40]He further believes that the SD card is handier to use, if people can overcome the technical obstacles.

Negative Feedback & Other Issues

Price & content considerations

The surveyors corroborated the opinions from respondents that the product prices were prohibitive.[41] Valère Nouangama says people bemoan their lack of funds to buy the materials.[42] Several of the formats were well beyond the means of many potential buyers. Some people think that all the products should be sold at lower prices. As it concerns the non-print media, most people felt that the amount of content was not

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[39] Jean Mbimong, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*, Observations and commentary (Lolodorf, Cameroon: CIED-LAK-TRAB, November 12, 2014). Perhaps due to the absence of literacy classes prior to the arrival of print materials, respondents expressed a preference for oral media over written media.

[40] Guialpfouo, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

[41] Cost is a common complaint about Scripture materials in Africa. It is really a matter of people's values and priorities. People with little means will spend a disproportionate amount of their income on clothes and technology, yet object to the cost of books, even those that are subsidized.

[42] Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

worth the cost of the item. I realized later that it was premature to evaluate media

formats containing only a single parable, as this was the source of several complaints.

Product quantity

Most people felt that there was not enough Scripture for any of the media. The

surveyors frequently heard respondents say that they are anxious to have the entire

Bible in their language.[43] They have asked why, up to now, only one parable has been

produced, given that the four Gospels and Acts were published 46 years ago. They say

that the work should advance rather than digress. For most of them, proof that the

work is progressing means that the translators would be working on the NT epistles.

Their impatience is understandable, given that the first requests for a Bible also began

at least 85 years ago.[44]

Product quality

Respondents made a variety of comments about product quality on a few different

levels: content and style. People thought that the translation itself needed

improvement. In fact, the first draft in Kwasio followed the syntax of the French source

text so closely that one reader was able to distinguish the version which had been used.

This was confirmed by our Kwasio language helper when he compared the latest

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[43] Victor Ndtoungou, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*, Observations and commentary (Bipindi, Cameroon: CIED-LAK-TRAB, June 22, 2014).

[44] The current language development and translation program began in 2004, when my wife and I were allocated to Lolodorf. We began learning Kwasio and mobilizing the community to initiate a translation project and take ownership of it. Over the years, linguistics was done, but translation did not begin until 2011.

translation of Luke based on an oral method to the previous version translated rather literally from French.[45] He exclaimed, "This new version sounds like the way we speak our language. That other one sounds like French!"[46] We have since modified the translation approach to generate one more natural, clear, and understandable.

In addition to concerns about content quality, the surveyors cited several criticisms from the interviewees concerning the quality of the audio-video recordings[47]:

- The DVDs were incompatible with most of the devices people own.

- Only middle-aged people own the devices needed for playing DVDs and CDs.

- People want the maximum amount of content in a book or on digital media, because they are accustomed to purchasing CDs with numerous songs, DVDs with entire movies, and whole Bibles or New Testaments in print. The products offered did not meet this criterion.

- The surveyors agreed with the interviewees that the reader's accent had a few mispronunciations.

- One person also brought to light the fact that this parable appeared to be still in draft form, needing additional revision.[48]

These responses have exposed some problems that we had not anticipated or issues about which we were not acutely aware. The inter-church committee and the translation team are now taking steps to address these concerns.

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[45] Our traditional method of translation works directly from written source text to written target text.
[46] Henri Bokally, Personal Communication, October 15, 2013.
[47] Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.
[48] The parable was first translated under the traditional system of written-to-written translation and was, therefore, less natural than it could be.

Logistical and Technical Challenges

Several logistical and technical challenges presented themselves during the course

of my research. One of the first inconveniences to be felt was the abrupt end of travel

funds.[49] As a result of the high cost of transportation, the coordinator had difficulty

getting the questionnaires back from the surveyors in the field.[50] The surveyors

encountered many difficulties due to the lack of electricity, such as Bipindi and villages

with sporadic power.[51]

In most locations, we learned that very few of the people own a television or device

that can play DVDs or VCDs.[52] We discovered that a large quantity of CDs was

unexplainably scratched.[53] Numerous people reported that their mobile phones have no

slot for an SD card. In addition, the translation team reported that most of the SD cards

were defective. It was not until November 2014 that I realized some of the surveyors did

not know how to operate the SD cards in their own mobile phones. By that time, it was

too late to demonstrate this product and attempt to conduct interviews all over again.

Understanding the Outcomes

Expected Results

I predicted that people would show great enthusiasm for the coloring books. Indeed,

the interest went beyond expectations. The coloring book was meant to target children,

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[49] Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.
[50] Ndtoungou, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*. Especially Bipindi and Lolodorf.
[51] Yinde, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.
[52] Mbimong, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.
[53] Yinde, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

but the research showed that they are equally appealing to adults, because people are

fascinated by interactive activities such as coloring, yet have little opportunity to do it.

Our experience leading Sunday school for the children at our local church revealed

children's fascination and interest in coloring books. The Bible-based coloring pages we

presented at the end of the lessons were received with delight. The Kwasio coloring

book evoked a similar response with people of all ages.[54] Parents also hoped that it

would give their children exposure to Kwasio, while stimulating their desire to learn

their mother tongue better.

Unanticipated Results

I had expected that the SD cards would be the most successful format for engaging

the community. Mobile phones are common devices where people can easily insert SD

cards, play the media, and freely pass the content onto others. This is what usually

happens in most places where Scripture Engagement workers use mobile phones. In our

study, however, it proved to be the most problematic. Furthermore, it was also the

second most expensive. As a result, it was one of the lowest selling products.

The most important query in the questionnaire was the question asking the

interviewee to name their favorite Scripture product. I assumed that they would choose

the one they wanted the most, regardless of their capacity to pay for the materials or

play the non-print media. Most respondents named more than one format, instead of

naming the one they preferred. Unbeknown to me, the surveyors did not correct this

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[54] Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

confusion. Fortunately, however, the failure of my survey instrument was compensated for by the written and verbal reports I received from the surveyors, who expressed in words what was not correctly notated in the questionnaire.[55]

Now that I have presented the results of the survey, I turn to my evaluations and conclusions. What implications will this study have on the Kwasio translation project and Scripture Engagement work? The following section looks at the recommendations and changes that have come out of the research, including current activities. In the last section, I propose the production of other Scripture Engagement media and areas of future research. I finish with a review of the outcomes of my own research methodology and its implementation.

C. ACTION PLANS FOR THE TRANSLATION PROJECT

Scripture Engagement Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this research project, many suggestions can be made to improve the present state of the translation project. Steps have already been taken by the committee and the translation team to address the issues articulated by the respondents and the surveyors:

– larger portions of Scripture are being translated before materials are produced;

– the translation style has been improved based on recommendations;

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[55] One possible reason for this is a disparity in worldview: the surveyors as well as the respondents did not understand that the questionnaire was only asking for one selection. I suspect that they are probably not inclined to identify a preference for something that is contrary to reality. Or, perhaps they are not in the habit of expressing desire for something they cannot acquire. Or they simply want to save face by pleasing the surveyors, or the people who sent them.

- the amount of Scripture content is being increased on the media items;

- the oral recording now uses an older, better known, more acceptable speaker;

- team members now know how to operate the SD cards in their phones;

- the number of media formats will be reduced (i.e., there will be no wall banner);

- additional literacy manuals are being produced for different audiences; and

- literacy teachers continue to be trained.

Kwasio project members still need to find more efficient and economical ways to distribute future Scripture products. One proposal is to promote the creation of small distribution centers or to assign volunteers to sell materials at local gatherings. They might also consider raising funds to subsidize costly products and to cover distribution expenses. Finally, they need to account for local conditions, especially for people in rural areas, who typically have less income, less access to electronic devices, and less reliable electricity than urbanized areas. Therefore, they will need to prepare a different combination of products based on each location.

Current Activities

In September 2015 the committee published a written translation of Luke's Gospel, supplemented by an audio version of the written text.[56] This time around, notable members of the Kwasio community touted the high quality of the translation and the

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[56] The translation team is working under the authority of CIED-LAK-TRAB, the Kwasio inter-church committee overseeing language development and Bible translation in Kwasio. The written translation being done has a grammatical style more closely resembling what we think of as literature. A purely oral version of the Scriptures matches more closely the spoken style of language, and may use more colloquialisms, onomatopoeia, repetition, and other verbal characteristics.

recording.[57] The audio version enabled them to listen to the text, even though Kwasio

literacy has still not been initiated. They appreciated the work so much that the leaders,

who were gathered at the presentation, stood and gave a long applause of

congratulations for the quality of the Luke audio recording. Their favorable comments

were numerous. One participant, a retired teacher and school inspector, said, "If the

whole Bible will be written like this, it will be a very good Bible."[58] Another retired

teacher, who is working on a dictionary, was also in attendance. He demanded that

everyone stand to applaud a second time after their hearing of the Luke audio.

Future Scripture Engagement Activities, Production, Testing, & Research

In the future, it would be beneficial to do similar research again, taking into account

what was learned in this study. It would be useful to produce and test other forms of

oral media that were not developed this time. Then project members would gain a

better idea of what combination of print, non-print, and oral media would be

appropriate as more Scripture continues to be translated.

I recommend that Kwasio Scripture Engagement workers consider producing other

types of media, such as those listed here:

– large illustrated books for group reading, called "Big Books";

– oral translations for public reading, responsive reading, and radio programs;

– oral storytelling, drama, and skits;

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[57] Valère Nouangama, "Thanks & Testimonies," October 7, 2015.
[58] Nouangama, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

– *Lessons from Luke*—children's Sunday School materials;[59] and

– indigenous hymnody, music, song, and dance.[60]

Now that Luke's Gospel has been published, the translation team can soon use the text to prepare the LUKE video or dub the script of the JESUS film in Kwasio. In the future, it may be beneficial to have groups of Kwasio Christians re-enacting passages of Luke through drama in both live performances and recorded audio-video form. It is clear that there are many more options for Scripture presentation, activities, and products.

In the next sections I discuss more specifically the strengths and weaknesses of the design and process of my research and how it could be improved in future studies.

D.RESEARCH METHOD EVALUATION—MEASURING SUCCESS

Design Strengths

The research mechanism I developed to evaluate Kwasio Scripture media was successful on a few points. The variety of media formats was broad and contemporary enough to make the new Scripture portions appealing and accessible. The questionnaires were relatively thorough and derived from long-tested research instruments. They were an effective means of collecting a substantial amount of data

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[59] A new Sunday school curriculum was developed in Cameroon by Chris and Karen Jackson, for vernacular languages. *Lessons from Luke* has already been translated into French, which can quickly be translated into Kwasio. This interactive series of 52 lessons includes illustrations, coloring pages, big picture books, and a complete bilingual teacher's guide. It has been a phenomenal success so far. Colleagues working on the Ndop Plain tested in a variety of churches after the Gospel of Luke had been translated in Chrambo. The program became so popular that the average church attendance for children doubled within a short time. Lessons are so interesting and informative that even adults want to attend children's church, saying that they were learning things they had never heard.

[60] If music & dance were used by the churches, it would equip them with an extremely powerful medium in this context to counter the negative influence of pervasive, sensual dance videos.

and constructive feedback. Furthermore, they were administered by local volunteers.

My thesis-project enabled me to glean some valuable insights—both positive and

negative—about research design and implementation in a new context.

Design Flaws

In retrospect, I believe that the decision to work through a mediator and have

surveyors conduct the interviews effectively removed my control over the data

collection process. They were unable to handle unexpected contingencies, such as

correcting misunderstandings about the aim of the research, accurately explaining

questions, adjusting for improperly phrased questions, or asking people to clarify their

comments. I, therefore, lacked some vital first-hand knowledge that could help me

interpret the results from these "second-hand" questionnaires. I found out later that

one of the surveyors left the questionnaires with respondents, instead of conducting the

interview himself on site, because some respondents lacked the time or the willingness

to answer questions.[61] Information flow between the coordinator, the surveyors in the

field, and myself was poor, caused by unreliable phone and email communication. This

kept us from dealing with problems expediently.

I concluded that the questionnaires were too exhaustive, since many respondents

refused to answer all the questions.[62] They were especially uncooperative about giving

personal information, such as name, contact number, date of birth, level of education,

and church affiliation. Unfortunately, I had not explained to the surveyors ahead of time

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[61] Ndtoungou, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.
[62] Ndtoungou, *Scripture Survey Impact Report--Kwasio Parable Media*.

that they could skip those questions, and move on to the more important questions directly addressing the Scripture products themselves. As a result, the remainder of the questionnaire was left incomplete. I learned that I should have provided the training myself, rather than working through a third person, because the surveyors had little or no experience with this kind of data collection. I thought the surveyors would voluntarily rephrase questions or ask for clarification.

 The surveyors' transportation expenses were partially paid from project funding.[63] The distribution of materials and interviews were combined with other project travel. However, the money in that budget was quickly depleted, because travel between towns and villages is expensive and time-consuming. The travel costs too much for the surveyors to afford. For the moment, there is no local funding to cover what is lacking. As a result, they were unable to sell all the products before the writing phase of my research had begun. This situation kept us from collecting more questionnaires and returning to carry out follow-up interviews, which meant a smaller population sample.

Suggested Modifications for Future Research

 I have learned that future research must take into consideration the potential costs of the study ahead of time. Researchers need to list all anticipated activities, estimate expenses for each one, and then see if it will be feasible to secure enough funding for the study. This will help avoid financial pitfalls that can hinder successful completion.

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[63] *The Seed Company* provided only enough money for mobilization trips.

We were constrained by several technical issues: media that appeared to be non-functional, devices that seemed to be incompatible with the media, surveyors who did not know how to manipulate all of the media effectively, and an undependable power supply in some locations. In the future, I would make sure the media is quality controlled, devices are working properly, and surveyors are trained to use all the media.

I discovered that I need to provide better training for surveyors on how to execute survey research. It is important that worldview differences between the researcher and interviewers be better harmonized. At the least, the research leader must gain an understanding of the surveyors' perspective, and be cognizant of his/her "foreign" viewpoint. This would manifest itself in shorter, less invasive questionnaires, and an in-depth explanation of the goals and methodology of academic research.

E. SUMMARY

In broad terms, the thesis-project was successful, enabling us to test six formats of the first Scripture products, to assess new survey questionnaires, and to experiment with research on inexperienced respondents and surveyors. I learned the differences between Western and African concepts of interrogation. I discovered some of the challenges of Scripture Engagement: in terms of distribution, sale, and choice of venue.

As I explained in the final section, there were many weaknesses in the thesis-project's design and implementation—excessive and intrusive questions and insufficient training. Furthermore, we encountered numerous unforeseen logistical obstacles: inadequate finances, geographical hindrances affecting travel, electrical issues, technological hurdles, and inconsistent communication between myself and the

fieldworkers. It also took an inordinate amount of time to receive questionnaires and reports back from the field. Nevertheless, I was eventually able to collect enough data to conduct my analysis.

This thesis-project attempted to discover, among the Kwasio people, whether audio-video formats would be more accessible and influential than traditional print media. The results of this study have pointed us to the popularity and usefulness of three of our Scripture media formats: coloring books, SD cards, and DVDs. These formats proved to be the most appealing and beneficial to the Kwasio people who were exposed to all the materials.[64] We now realize that the Kwasio community needs a combination of print and non-print media. We can expect that print media which are accompanied by oral reading, drama, retelling, or other visual media will generate an increased interest in the print materials and reinforce people's retention of the content. They earnestly desire God's Word in print; but they also have a strong interest in oral and multi-media versions of Scripture, especially as literacy courses remain unavailable.

In time, Christian workers in the Kwasio project, collaborating with outside partners, will find ways to stimulate growth in Bible knowledge among their own people. They may find ideas in Scripture as they engage with the Word of God and trust the Holy Spirit to inspire other creative methods for reaching their society with its truths. This thesis-project is the first Scripture Engagement study ever done among the Kwasio people. My hope is to see the Scriptures bring about positive transformation in their

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[64] They may likely be equally appropriate for two other languages in the region: Iyasa and Batanga.

lives. I am motivated to see Kwasio people engage with Scripture as they interact with it

regularly.

APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRES

INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE 1— INTERVIEW AT PURCHASE OF PRODIGAL SON PARABLE

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____ Place: _____

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name of interviewee: _____ Sex: ___ Age: ___ Phone: _____

Grade (circle your level of education)			9th
Kindergarten	3rd	6th	10th
1st	4th	7th	11th
2nd	5th	8th	12th

Note training or schooling received in addition to general education:
_____

QUESTIONS ABOUT CHURCH & LANGUAGES

Which languages do you speak each day?

|—Kwasio—|—French—|—other language(s)_____—|

In which domains do you use these languages?

|—home—|—school—|—field—|—other place(s)_____—|
_____

Member of which church: _____ (*Note attendance below)*:

|—more than once a week—|—every Sunday—|—2 or 3x/month—|—irregularly—|

Which languages are used at church?

|—Kwasio—|—French—|—other language(s)_____—|

PRODUCTS PURCHASED

Which format of the parable did you choose? *Please underline your choice below*.

- •A5 booklet(for personal reading; to give to someone else; to read to someone)
- •coloring book (for children; for teaching at church)
- •6-ft banner (to hang up at home or at church)
- •CD (to watch on TV with a video player)
- •DVD (to watch on computer or on TV with a DVD player)
- •SD card (to watch or listen to on a cell phone)

What are your reasons for choosing this format (or these formats)?

- •to see the language written

- to read it
- to listen and see the images
- to have this new technology
- to show to others
- to teach children
- to use at church
- to use at school
- other reasons (*write in*) _____

Do you have a Bible at home?|—YES—|—NO—|

In which language?|—French—|—Bulu—|—Ewondo—|—o*ther*_____—|
_____

How often do you read it? |—rarely—|—occasionally—|—regularly—|

LITERACY

Can you already read Kwasio? |—YES—|—NO—|

If not, are you interested in learning to read Kwasio? |—YES—|—NO—|

What sort of books would you like to have in Kwasio?
_____

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE 2—FEEDBACK ON THE PRODIGAL SON PARABLE

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____ Place: _____

FORMATS:
Which form of the parable did you like the most?

A5 booklet	coloring book	banner
CD	DVD	SD card

How did you use it?

_____

USE:
Are you still reading, looking at, or listening to the parable? |—YES—|—NO—|
Who else has been able to read the parable?

_____

Who else has watched the audio-video version of the parable?

_____

How did others respond to seeing and hearing this parable?

_____

IMPACT:
What do you remember about the Prodigal Son parable?

_____

REACTIONS:
Do you have any questions or comments about the parable?

_____

ADVICE:
Do you have any suggestions for those who are doing the translation of texts into Kwasio?

_____

Do you have any recommendations for the production of materials in Kwasio?

_____

APPENDIX B: SCRIPTURE PRODUCTS

PRINT FORMATS

A5 Leaflet:

Front & back

Middle pages

A4 Coloring Book

Front cover and two inside pages

Mua munung mi ndzim

Livre à colorer « Le Fils Perdu »

Inside pages

Yesus sa kanda pe gigsi bogig bó.

Mua dzinii mi nlee song naa :
koa pfuma yé ywe la'g me ngkoo nwang, me wum tsie'g na melepfuo.

Ki song a'g le ñe
ngkoo nwó pfuma.

6-Foot Banner

Print format & Photo

DVD/CD

Screenshot shown on computer (original is in color)

koo sil ñamgu pfuma yé wu na
tsie'g bio.

SD Card

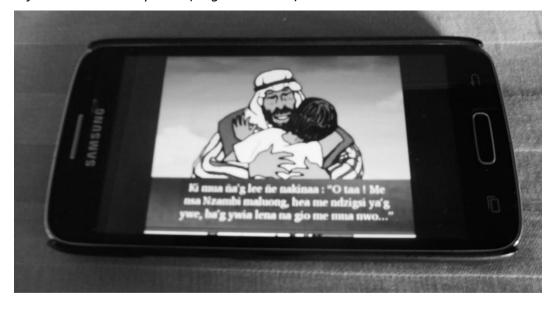*Photo of SD Card used on phone (original in color)*

Photo of all AV products

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